

Health Policy Brief

Our state's future prosperity and health depends on all Californians having a fair chance to thrive and succeed. Good health is not only the foundation of a productive society and a thriving California; it is also an essential prerequisite for young people to achieve social and economic success. As California becomes increasingly diverse, it will be especially critical to nurture and harness the talent, skills and hope of young people of color – and boys and young men of color in particular.

We use the term “health” globally to capture indicators of physical and mental health status as well as indicators of high-risk behavior. Healthy minds and bodies enable youth to learn, to embark on positive developmental trajectories and to become active and productive citizens. Healthy child and adolescent development is shaped by multiple layers of social factors — from family and neighborhood settings to local, state and federal policies.¹

Americans, as a whole, are living much longer than ever before. Our collective life expectancy rate recently reached a record American high of 77.5 years, up nearly 30 years from 49.2 at the turn of the 20th century. Yet a life expectancy gap between whites and people of color persists.² Simply put, Americans of color are living in worse conditions, suffering worse health and dying younger. African Americans and Mexican Americans are more likely to be obese than whites. The death rate from cancer is 30 percent higher for African Americans than it is for whites, while the death rate from heart disease is 40 percent higher. HIV remains among the top ten causes of death for blacks in the U.S., but not for any other race groups, while homicide ranks among the top ten causes of death for all race groups except whites.³

In California, people of color generally, and males of color specifically, continue to experience worse access to health care and worse health outcomes. The economic and opportunity costs associated with poor health outcomes are shared by all Californians through money spent on preventable medical care and lost productivity in the workplace, among other things. There is a broad consensus that California needs a coordinated, integrated health system that is community-based, trauma-informed and culturally competent. Yet what young men and boys currently experience is limited or no health coverage, limited access to health services or a health home and no access to trauma-informed care. Communities of color disproportionately lack access to health services—due to lack of insurance coverage or even lack of access to services which do not require such coverage—and this situation is particularly intense for boys and young men of color.

Building on the Affordable Care Act

The implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) in California presents a unique and unprecedented opportunity to increase access to health benefits for boys and young men of color.⁴ Despite the

¹ Bronfenbrenner, U. 1979. *The Ecology of Human Development*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.

² Shrestha, Laura B. *Life Expectancy in the United States*. Domestic Social Policy Division, Congressional Research Service, The Library of Congress. Updated 2006. <http://aging.senate.gov/crs/aging1.pdf>

³ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <http://www.cdc.gov/men/lcod/index.htm>

⁴ For example, through the several mechanisms to increase the access points for care, there will be opportunities to increase the awareness about eligibility requirements and processes for enrollment for health services benefits, as well as other public benefits. This process will also generate an opportunity to identify and address potential and real administrative hurdles for enrollment of these individuals. Additional benefits of the reform will include denial of coverage due to pre-existing conditions no longer being applied to children, community health clinics receiving new funding and both recipients of government-sponsored programs as well as the privately-insured seeing expanded access to preventive care.

Claiming the Promise of Health & Success for Boys and Men of Color

possibility presented by ACA, several challenges still exist to improve health benefits for boys and young men in areas such as disproportionate representation in the juvenile justice and foster care systems that hit these boys and young men especially hard with disruptions in coverage.⁵

Implementation of ACA will pose its own set of challenges, and it will be important for communities of color to be educated about what the reforms will concretely mean on the ground. As noted, many boys and young men of color have difficulty accessing appropriate primary care because they live in areas with shortages of health professionals and/or medical services. Additionally, the delivery of health services to boys and young men in low-wealth and geographically isolated communities typically fail to address and overcome cultural and linguistic barriers to care.

Improving Access to Health Homes

The end result of this restricted access to health services is the lack of access to health homes, or usual sources of care. Additional factors that contribute to this lack of health homes include lack of insurance, low number of parents having a health home, inadequate physician coverage by low-income and rural communities due in part to physicians who do not accept Medi-Cal, stigma attached to utilizing health services even with insurance coverage and paperwork and eligibility barriers. Health homes are a concept for health services in which providers partner with the consumers to provide accessible, comprehensive, coordinated, family-centered, culturally competent and prevention-oriented care.⁶

Research indicates that having a health home and/or usual source of primary care is a stronger predictor of receiving care than insurance alone and is associated with more accurate diagnoses, reduced emergency room use, fewer hospitalizations, lower costs, better prevention and increased patient satisfaction.⁷

Even when young men and boys do obtain health care, they encounter health providers or other community health institutions that lack an understanding of the trauma they have experienced.

Addressing Trauma

Boys and young men of color are disproportionately affected by various forms of trauma and adversity including violence, poverty, unemployment, incarceration, lack of access to health care, marginalization and low social status. In California, African American children are 2.5 times and Latino children 1.3 times more likely to suffer from abuse than white children. Studies have shown that maltreated children are more likely to be incarcerated in either state or local correctional facilities. This chronic adversity creates deep emotional pain and distress, and overwhelms an individual's ability to cope.

Economic and social insecurity coupled with violence are additional harsh realities. In California, African American children are four times more likely to be in the foster care system. Nationally, African American and Latino children are three and two times more likely, respectively, than white children to have been exposed to shootings, or other forms of violence. And both African American and Latino children are more than seven times more likely to have someone close to them murdered.

⁵ Disconnected Youth (Youth Law Center).

⁶ TCE Building Healthy Homes Resource Guide, Outcome Two: Families Have Improved Access to Health Homes that Promote Healthy Behavior (p.1).

⁷ Starfield, B., & Shi, L. (2004, May), The Medical Home, Access to Care, and Insurance: A Review of Evidence. *Pediatrics* 113(5), 1493-1498.

Claiming the Promise of Health & Success for Boys and Men of Color

Given the high incidence of trauma and chronic adversity that boys and young men of color experience, the Center for Nonviolence and Social Justice at Drexel University examined whether the institutions engaged with boys and young men of color are being responsive to those who have experienced trauma. They unfortunately found that trauma is seldom explored by the array of systems—schools, juvenile justice, courts, health care, mental health—assigned to help boys and young men of color. Those institutions often take a punitive rather than a healing approach to these young men, interpreting their symptoms and experiences as a sign that they are delinquents or sociopaths rather than a sign of both physical and emotional traumatic injury.

Toward Improved Health Policy

Access to appropriate health services is a crucial part of improving health outcomes for boys and young men of color. Public policy must be sensitive to the way health—good or poor—manifests in specific populations of boys and men of color such as gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning young men, immigrants and those involved with our court and justice systems

Many factors contribute to an individual's chances for living a long, fulfilling, rewarding, happy and productive life—none so greatly and fundamentally as good health.

Fast Facts

- Lack of health insurance remains a significant barrier to good health outcomes for boys and men of color. California is home to 1.1 million uninsured children. The odds of children being uninsured in California are higher than in 34 other states and the District of Columbia. Nationally, Latino children are more than twice as likely as white children to be uninsured; one out of every six Latino children is uninsured compared to one in 14 white children.⁸ Latino children are less likely than white or African American children to have health insurance.⁹ In California, Latino boys and adolescents (0-17) are about five times as likely as their white counterparts to be currently uninsured. And, among uninsured children eligible for public insurance, Latino children were least likely to be enrolled.¹⁰
- Nationally, homicide is the leading cause of death for African American males 10-29, and the second leading cause of death for Latino males 10-29. Black males' murder victimization rates are approximately 18 times higher than those of white males, while the rate for Latino males is six times that of white males.¹¹
- Nationally, African American and Latino children are three and two times more likely, respectively, than white children to have been exposed to shootings or other forms of violence, and both African American and Latino children are more than seven times more likely to have someone close to them murdered.¹²
- Economic and social insecurity combined with violence, limited opportunity, and trauma equates to a harsh reality for boys and young men of color. In California, African American children are 2.5 times and Latino children 1.3 times more likely to suffer from abuse than white children. Studies have shown that maltreated children are more likely to be incarcerated. In California, African American children are disproportionately represented in the foster care system by four times.
- The neighborhood in which a child grows up and his family background are strongly linked to his well-being and, later, his health as an adult and the health of his children. The impact that growing up in a neighborhood of concentrated disadvantage has on a child's cognitive verbal development and ability is equivalent to missing one or two entire years of schooling. Also, communities with high levels of concentrated poverty lack basic amenities many of us take for granted such as access to fresh and healthy foods, parks and green space, and safe and walkable streets.¹³ The absence of these critical community supports contributes to high levels of obesity and chronic disease in boys and men of color. Furthermore, the strongest effects of growing up amid profound disadvantage are felt by children and young people several years after they no longer live in such neighborhoods.¹⁴
- Chronic stress and trauma inflict profound mental, emotional, physiological and developmental damage on children. Repeated trauma during childhood¹⁵ can result in improper brain and

⁸ State of America's Children, 2011, The Children's Defense Fund. Available at <http://www.childrensdefense.org/child-research-data-publications/state-of-americas-children-2011/>

⁹ (Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, 2007)

¹⁰ (RAND, *Reparable Harm*, 2009)

¹¹ (National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, 2006)

¹² (Finkelhor et al. 2005)

¹³ Bell and Lee. *Why Place and Race Matter*. p.16. April 2011, PolicyLink.

¹⁴ Acevedo-Garcia, Dolores, et. al., "The Geography of Opportunity: A Framework of Child Development." *Changing Places*. 2010

¹⁵ Such as witnessing violence, a threat to a caregiver or loved one or experiencing neglect or abuse

Claiming the Promise of Health & Success for Boys and Men of Color

emotional development as well as loss of direction, the ability to regulate emotions, and the ability to detect or respond appropriately to danger cues.¹⁶ Children who are exposed to violence are more likely to suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and depression, become victims of violence, exhibit a range of behavioral problems, abuse substances and engage in risky behavior and criminal activity.¹⁷

- For males of color in California, access to a usual source of health care declines as they grow older. While 6.9% of boys of color don't have access to a usual source of care, fully 21.6% percent of young men of color, aged 15-21, do not. Latino boys in California are two and a half times more likely than white boys to lack a usual source of medical care. Nationally, 10.9 percent of Latino children lacked a usual source of medical care in 2006 compared with 5.1 percent of white children.^{18 19 20}
- Approximately 71 percent of all HIV/AIDS cases diagnosed in 2007 were among racial and ethnic minorities and persons of color living with HIV/AIDS are more likely to experience a myriad of social and economic challenges that inevitably exacerbate the conditions known to be associated with this disease. Moreover, gay and bisexual men and racial/ethnic minorities comprise the greatest proportion of HIV cases in the United States.²¹

¹⁶ (National Scientific Council on the Developing Child 2007)

¹⁷ (Peled, Jaffe, and Edleson, 1995) (Family Violence Prevention Fund, 2002) (RAND, *Reparable Harm*, 2009)

¹⁸ 2007 California Health Interview Survey

¹⁹ (Bloom and Cohen, 2007)

²⁰ (RAND, *Reparable Harm*, 2009)

²¹ *Community Ideas for Improving the Response to the Domestic HIV Epidemic, A Report on a National Dialogue on HIV/AIDS*, White House Office of National AIDS Policy, April 2010.

http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/microsites/ONAP_rpt.pdf

Strategic Intervention Points

Developing Health Homes

Research indicates that having a health home and/or usual source of primary care is a stronger predictor of receiving care than insurance alone and is associated with more accurate diagnoses, reduced emergency room use, fewer hospitalizations, lower costs, better prevention and increased patient satisfaction.²² The health home model involves providers partnering with the patient and family to provide accessible, prevention-oriented care. Boys and young men of color currently have limited access to either health homes or any usual source of care.

This also requires a reorientation of the conventional workforce recruitment, training, and retention model. This will be needed to build and retain a workforce of health service providers that can meet the demands of a shifting patient demographic. This includes the cultivation of a workforce that understands the key role of culture and patient values in the ability to develop an appropriately responsive and effective care delivery system that truly connects to the patients it serves. This would be accomplished by:

- **Creating coordinated care networks that integrate health care providers (hospitals, clinics, school-based health centers) to comprehensive care networks;**
 - Expanding number of school-based health centers linked to an integrated delivery network;
 - Improving the primary health care workforce development system and expanding capacity for these providers to address communities' health needs; and
 - Establishing integrated health care services for juvenile offenders that maximize the use of community clinics, county behavioral health departments and county probation agencies and existing funding streams.
- **Prototyping delivery system reforms targeted to boys and men of color in the public safety net system to model for the private sector; and**
- **Identifying and creating financial incentives to emphasize prevention within the health systems as well as inclusion of community health approaches aimed at primary prevention.**

Increasing Access to Health and Other Benefits

The changes being made to the overall health system through the Affordable Care Act (ACA) in California will require proper implementation to be effective. Beyond this, additional policy reforms need to be made to ensure that broader benefits extend to boys and young men of color. Enrollment and eligibility in health coverage, social services and other programs that contribute to health need to be simplified. Transition plans for young adults aging out of coverage through a parent's plan or foster care need to be developed. Large-scale culturally and linguistically appropriate education campaigns about coverage options, targeted to the newly eligible but underserved populations, should be implemented. Investments must be made in technology to expand access and eligibility. Enrollment in job-based coverage should be maximized. Seamless coverage must be there for life transitions. Benefits should be

²² Starfield, B., & Shi, L. (2004, May), The Medical Home, Access to Care, and Insurance: A review of Evidence. *Pediatrics* 113(5), 1493-1498.

Claiming the Promise of Health & Success for Boys and Men of Color

enabled for access to all Californians, regardless of immigration status. Realizing this would be achieved through:

- **Supporting outreach, enrollment, retention and utilization efforts targeting low-income and low-wealth communities:**
 - Improving the policies, practices and systems that manage enrollment in and utilization of health and other resources (e.g., simplifying the processes, utilizing technology to improve public access, etc);
 - Developing efforts to ensure seamless health coverage that responds to changing life circumstances and transitions; and
 - Implementing large scale education campaigns on coverage options.
- **Crafting local coverage/care programs to cover all of California:**
 - Comprehensive coverage programs; and
 - Supporting efforts to provide “Gap” coverage programs.
- **Supporting efforts to connect individuals and families to a bundle of public benefits (nutrition, income security, etc.) and services that families need to thrive economically.**

Developing Trauma-Informed Care and Services

To address the realities of trauma and chronic adversity experienced by boys and young men of color, community institutions, beginning with health providers, need to incorporate this experience into their approach to these boys and young men. Specific solutions include creation of a professional development institute for education and leadership in trauma-informed principles and practices, support for and expansion of community-based efforts that are consistent with a trauma-informed approach, and support for trauma-informed prevention activities. This can be undertaken by:

- **Incorporating trauma-informed practices into professional development of health and human services system practitioners; and**
- **Prototyping community-based efforts consistent with a trauma-informed approach;**
 - Creating trauma-informed care in community health centers and medical centers that serve the community; and
 - Supporting trauma-informed prevention activities that understand the influence of race and gender in health seeking behavior.
- **Intervening early to promote children’s health, supporting early child development and parent skill-building and education programs targeted at children of color in disadvantaged neighborhoods.** Ensuring enriching day care, pre-school, and at-home environments that bolster young children’s cognitive and verbal ability. Teaching the parents of young children how to provide stable attachment and nurturing interactions and how to provide enrichment at home.
- **Filling the gap: transforming the way health care is provided by integrating other key services into health homes that provide consistent care with minimal barriers (i.e. health insurance coverage).** Establishing or expanding health services at schools and in community settings, especially those

Claiming the Promise of Health & Success for Boys and Men of Color

primarily serving low-income children of color. Alternative services should be provided as needed and/or coordinated through a broader support network. Expand health insurance coverage for low-income people of color. Education and outreach efforts can alert residents to existing low-cost or free clinics, health services and health insurance they may access.

Policy and Systems Reforms that Can Make a Difference

Support and expand early childhood intervention programs that increase access and exposure to enriching, stimulating environments and stable, nurturing relationships to improve the health and well-being of the child’s entire family. Support and expand preschool programs that provide such environments and serve low-income children in disadvantaged neighborhoods.²³ Within the medical care system, support and expand programs²⁴ that take a holistic care approach that improves health outcomes for low-income mothers and young children by addressing the links between physical, emotional and financial health and stability.²⁵ Investment in early childhood intervention programs for disadvantaged children is “a rare public policy initiative that promotes fairness and social justice and at the same time promotes productivity in the economy and in society at large.”²⁶

Change the way that systems and institutions (school, juvenile justice, court, health care, mental health, etc.) respond to traumatized males of color by encouraging them to adopt and expand trauma-informed care programs. One such skill-building intervention program, developed specifically for low-income ethnic minority and immigrant youth in California, teaches children skills for relaxation, challenging detrimental thought patterns, solving conflicts, processing grief and recovering from trauma. The school-based program, Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS), has significantly reduced PTSD and depression in participants.²⁷ Health care institutions’ and systems’ have also partnered with social service providers to provide holistic intervention programs that address health and trauma issues while reducing circumstantial and behavioral predictors of those issues. The University of Maryland’s holistic, multi-step Violence Intervention Program, for example, connects social workers to victims of violence who have formerly been incarcerated. Recovery plans include substance abuse rehabilitation, conflict resolution, workforce training and more, and result in significantly fewer future arrests and convictions.²⁸

Mental illness has been little understood, widely stigmatized and often untreated in this country. It has been linked with substance abuse, homelessness and violent behavior. **Preventive care, early diagnosis and intervention and other mental health programs and services—especially for the presently underserved adolescent population—are sorely needed. The California Mental Health Services Act’s (MHSA) Prevention and Early Intervention (PEI) programs can dramatically improve mental health services for youth and health outcomes for us all.** More than half of PEI funds—over \$156M in 2008-09—must go toward services for young people 25 and under. PEI funds support, among other things, programs that reduce the factors that contribute to mental health disorders.

Increase access to regular, quality health care for underserved children and youth by increasing the number of school-based health centers (SBHCs) in California and across the nation. Communities facing SBHCs are supported by a wide variety of funding sources and can break down barriers to care that typically face low-income youth of color, such as lack of transportation, lack of insurance and health

²³ (Barnett and Masse 2007)

²⁴ (NFP) (Olds 2006)

²⁵ (Karoly, Kilburn, and Cannon 2005)

²⁶ (Heckman 2006: 1,902)

²⁷ (Source: Ngo et al, 2008)

²⁸ University of Maryland Medical Center, R. Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center, Violence Prevention Program. Available at http://www.umm.edu/shocktrauma/special_programs/violence_prevention_program.htm

care provider shortages. Access to SBHCs has been shown to improve academic, as well as health outcomes for underserved youth.²⁹

Increasing the numbers of men of color in the health field will improve health outcomes for this population. Access to and availability of primary care increases chances for early detection of illnesses, saves money and improves health equity on a large scale. Recruitment of and support for more providers and health professionals is needed, as well as culturally appropriate training to cultivate leaders of color in the field who can proactively identify and address health issues facing underserved communities.³⁰

California's efforts to reform federal health care—via implementation of the Medicaid waiver and the Affordable Care Act—could be amplified as well as studied for future improvement. Grant money from the Act should be channeled to community and home health providers. Data collection and analysis related to this funding should occur, in order to test the success of and improve upon payment reform strategies. In addition, assistance programs should be established and implemented to serve patients who need help navigating the system and those who are moving from pediatric to adult health care.

²⁹ (Allison et al. 2007), (Gustafson 2005), (National Assembly on School-Based Health Care 2010), (Walker et al. 2010), (Slopen and Williams)

³⁰ (Starfield, Shi, and Macinko 2005), (Komaromy et al. 1996), (Schlueter 2006), (Drake 2009), (Manetta et al. 2007)

Education Policy Brief

Any child can learn. Our state's future prosperity and health depends on all Californians having a fair chance to thrive and succeed. Education is an important piece of this puzzle. Studies show that higher educational outcomes have a lasting impact on a young person's ability to obtain meaningful employment and be set on a path for health and success. As California becomes increasingly diverse, it will be especially critical to nurture and harness the talent, skills, and hope of young people of color—and boys and young men of color in particular.

To be successful, all children need strong and effective schools that are designed to build the skills and capacity needed for healthy social, academic, and career development. This is no different for boys and men of color. This is especially important for those who live in neighborhoods and communities, where a daunting set of challenges and obstacles stand in the way of their success. **A consensus has now developed among child development experts and public health researchers: environments of concentrated disadvantage tend to engender behaviors and stresses that are not conducive to learning and that often trigger hostile attitudes toward institutions. African American and Latino children have far less access to schools that display high levels of academic achievement, and less access to after-school programs and safe recreational spaces. To further complicate matters, boys and young men of color are over-represented in the juvenile justice system, which is wholly unequipped to take an approach that recognizes the trauma and chronic adversity experienced by these boys and young men.**

Neighborhoods can expand or limit the opportunities of boys and young men of color, and this extends to schools. Attendance at most public elementary schools in the United States is neighborhood-based, and the level of neighborhood segregation is high.³¹ As a consequence, vast racial and ethnic gaps in neighborhood poverty match vast racial and ethnic gaps in school poverty, underscoring a strong structural link between neighborhood and school context.³² This means that African American and Latino children are more likely to experience “triple jeopardy”: to face challenging issues in their families, their neighborhoods, and their schools, all at the same time. These challenges at multiple levels may compromise the resilience of African American and Latino children.³³

Young men of color are also more likely to go to schools where they don't have the tools and help they need to learn, including experienced and qualified teachers. For instance, during the 2008-2009 school-year, the California middle schools that served more than 90 percent Latino, African American and American Indian students were almost 10 times more likely than majority white and Asian schools to experience severe shortages of qualified teachers.

Harsh discipline policies and practices compound the problem of attending low-performing schools. Some advocates use the term “zero tolerance” which is shorthand for mandatory, uniform punishments and practices that suspend, expel, or push out students of all races at now record rates and students of

³¹ Iceland, John, Daniel H. Weinberg, and Erica Steinmetz. *Racial and Ethnic Residential Segregation in the United States: 1980–2000*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Government Printing Office, 2002.

³² Logan, John R. *Separate and Unequal: The Neighborhood Gap for Blacks and Hispanics in Metropolitan America*. Albany, N.Y.: Lewis Mumford Center for Comparative Urban and Regional Research, 2002.

³³ Acevedo-Garcia, Dolores, et al., “The Geography of Opportunity: A Framework of Child Development” In *Changing Places: How Communities Will Improve the Health of Boys of Color*, edited by Christopher Edley and Jorge Ruiz de Velasco, 358-406. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010.

color at highly disproportionate rates. California schools suspend and expel students at an annual rate of 12.75 percent, resulting in nearly 800,000 suspensions and expulsions. And more than half of suspensions and expulsions don't stem from more serious offenses like violence or bringing a gun to school, but from misbehavior like shoving in the hallway, talking back to teachers, or missing school. National studies have called the effectiveness of harsh discipline policies into question, demonstrating the loss of instruction time faced by young people who are subject to these practices. School districts from Georgia to Maryland that have reoriented school discipline policies away from harsh disciplinary policies are beginning to see results including increased graduation rates.

Health and Education Go Hand-in-Hand

Bridging the divide between health and education will be an important step in addressing the issues laid out above, particularly given the clear connection between health and learning. A large body of evidence strongly and consistently links education—the number of years spent getting a primary, secondary, and tertiary education—with health, even when taking factors like income into account. People with more education are likely to live longer, to be healthier, to exercise regularly, refrain from smoking, and go to the doctor for timely health-care check-ups and screenings. A recent analysis makes explicit the connection between young people's education and health issues such as vision, asthma, teenage pregnancy, aggression and violence, physical inactivity, lack of breakfast and inattention and hyperactivity.³⁴

Frameworks such as the Coordinated School Health Program offer an important conceptual approach. School-based health clinics operated in partnership with health agencies are growing. Mental health agencies offer some services on-site at schools. Youth development organizations often operating in schools are concerned about health competencies but do not have true partnerships. The Healthy Start program in California has stayed alive at low levels of activity; and the California Department of Education is supporting exploration of the community schools approach across the state. The past 15 years have seen progress in bridging these institutions, yet the system of narrow categorical funding and self-interest of individual agencies remains dominant.

Absent are coherent policy frameworks and essential partnership vehicles to drive these and other systems to work together toward the kind of results that boys and young men of color need: a healthy home for every child and family; increased opportunity for employment; decreased youth violence and increased attendance. Schools are places where eligibility for health benefits can be determined, and school health clinics should be linked to other medical facilities. Health is among the factors that affect attendance; childhood asthma and parental depression are also among the health-related indicators affecting attendance and youth violence is clearly a public health problem and affects the climate at and around school.

The strategies proposed in this paper focus on developing the people, partnerships, and policies that will bring health and education institutions together with neighborhood and community leadership to achieve the results that are necessary over the long haul. Specific evidence-based programs are indeed important; however, implementing and sustaining such programs requires a new set of institutional arrangements. These arrangements should be built on the principle that partnership is the key to better

³⁴ Basch, Charles. *Healthier Students are Better Learners: A Missing Link in School Reforms to Close the Achievement Gap*. Campaign for Education Equity at Teachers College, Columbia University, March 2010.

Claiming the Promise of Health & Success for Boys and Men of Color

results and thus public policy must provide “incentives for sustainable results-driven partnerships” — partnerships that mobilize and organize the financial resources of public and private agencies and the human capital of neighborhoods and communities toward a set of common goals.

That the educational success of boys and young men of color lags far behind that of any of their peers is well known. However, the systemic challenges outlined above that underpin this reality are less known. This issue brief provides some of the more important facts relevant to education policy reform efforts in California, identifies strategic intervention points, and shares examples of policy and systemic reforms that are essential to improving educational outcomes for BMoC. For the purposes of this issue brief, education encompasses early childhood programs, elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, colleges and universities, and workforce training programs.

Fast Facts

The numbers below tell a grim story. Yet there is hope and promise because we do know what works and there are successful programs emerging across the state and country that can be built on, as detailed in the Strategic Intervention Points and Policy and Systems Reform sections.

- **Health Issues Widen Serious Achievement Gaps.** The achievement gap is evident by third grade in California as shown by STAR English Language Arts scores where 30 percent of Latino students, 32 percent of African American students, 61 percent of white students and 67 percent of Asian students score proficient or advanced.³⁵ This achievement gap is paralleled by noteworthy gaps students of color experience in school safety, connection to and engagement in school, and basic supports for health and wellness.
- **Lower Levels of Reading and Math Proficiency.** According to a study by the Rand Corporation, African American and Latino fourth graders are 2.2 times and 2.3 times, respectively, more likely to score below proficient on the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) reading test than their white classmates. They are 3.5 and 3.6 times more likely to score below proficient in the NAEP math test than their white classmates.³⁶ Research has demonstrated the importance of these early indicators for predicting which children will have trouble progressing successfully through elementary, middle, and high schools.
- **Disproportionate Use of Disciplinary Measures.** The proliferation of harsh and extreme disciplinary measures is disproportionately pushing students of color out of our public education system. The Institute for Democracy, Education and Access (IDEA) based at UCLA found that African American students represented 8 percent of the state's public school enrollment, but 19 percent of out-of-school suspensions in the 2002-2003 school term.³⁷
- **Shortage of Qualified Teachers.** The class of 2009 entered ninth grade at a time of expanding economic opportunities, but graduated in a period of economic decline. During the 2009 class enrollment, California's per-pupil expenditures were lower than almost any other state, with the near worst ratios of teachers and counselors to students. In 2008-09, the many California middle schools that served more than 90 percent Latino, African American, and American Indian students were almost 10 times more likely than majority white and Asian schools to experience severe shortages of qualified teachers.³⁸
- **Lower Rates of High School Completion.** African American Californians over age 25 are nearly twice as likely to be without a high school diploma as whites, while Latinos in California are almost seven times as likely to be without a high school degree. This extremely large gap for Latinos is explained in part by the differences in educational attainment between native-born and other citizens. In

³⁵ Children Now analysis of data from the California Department of Education, Educational Demographics Unit, "California Standards Test Score," for 2010 STAR Test Results, <http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>.

³⁶ RAND Corporation, *Reparable Harm: Assessing and Addressing Disparities Faced by Boys and Men of Color in California*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2009.

³⁷ UCLA Institute for Democracy, Education and Access. *Suspension and Expulsion At-A-Glance*. Accessed August 1, 2011 <http://idea.gseis.ucla.edu/publications/files/suspension.pdf>.

³⁸ Rogers, J., Bertrand, M., Freelon, R., and S. Fanelli. *Free Fall: Educational Opportunities in 2011*. Los Angeles: UCLA IDEA, UC/ACCORD, 2011.

Claiming the Promise of Health & Success for Boys and Men of Color

California, about nine out of ten native-born U.S. citizens have a high school degree, compared with only half of noncitizens and three-quarters of naturalized citizens.³⁹

- **Lower Rates of Post-Secondary Completion.** As of 2008, only 41.6 percent of 25- to 34-year-olds in the United States had attained an associate degree or higher. However, only 30.3 percent of African Americans and 19.8 percent of Latinos 25 to 34 years old attained an associate degree or higher in the United States compared to 49.0 percent for white Americans and 70.7 percent for Asian Americans.⁴⁰
- **Limited Qualifications for Colleges and Universities.** Furthermore, a study by the Civil Rights Project at Harvard Law School shows of those that do graduate from high school, only 14 percent of Latino high school graduates and 15 percent of African American high school graduates have successfully completed the courses that are required to seek admission to California’s four-year colleges and universities.⁴¹
- **High Rates of Contact with Criminal Justice System.** Nationally, African American children are almost seven and a half times more likely, and Latino children are more than two and a half times more likely than white children to have a parent in prison.⁴² According to a study by the California Research Bureau in 2000, an estimated 856,000 California children—approximately one in nine—have a parent involved in the adult criminal justice system. Research has shown that children of incarcerated parents are more likely to exhibit low self-esteem, depression, emotional withdrawal from friends and family, inappropriate or disruptive behavior at home and in school, and increased risk of future delinquency and criminal behavior.⁴³

³⁹ RAND Corporation, *Reparable Harm: Assessing and Addressing Disparities Faced by Boys and Men of Color in California*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2009.

⁴⁰ Lee, J. M., and A. Rawls. *The College Completion Agenda: 2010 Progress Report*. New York: The College Board, 2010.

⁴¹ Ali, Russlynn. “A-G for All... Bringing the LA Movement to your Backyard: A Snapshot of High Schools in Oakland and San Francisco,” presentation by The Education Trust-West, July 2008.

⁴² Glaze, Lauren and L. Maruschak. *Parents in Prison and Their Minor Children*. U.S. Department of Justice: Bureau of Justice Statistics. 2008.

⁴³ RAND Corporation, *Reparable Harm: Assessing and Addressing Disparities Faced by Boys and Men of Color in California*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2009.

Strategic Intervention Points

We have identified a number of important efforts to improve educational outcomes for boys and men of color through partnership, systems change, and policy reform. These interventions focus on strategic points along the state's (P-16) public education and workforce training systems. Though there are many variations of the following cross-cutting efforts, the work can be organized to focus resources and leadership toward the following broad streams.

Better Health through Academics

Young boys and men of color need strong and effective schools that are designed to build the skills and capacity needed for healthy academic development.

- **Improving the performance of Early Childhood Programs and Elementary Schools** to ensure boys of color are reading, writing, and doing math at or above grade level by third grade. These efforts have focused on: improving attendance in school, building the capacity of parents to take leadership and serve as their child's first teacher, reforming curriculum and instruction to improve program, school and teacher performance, and supporting strategies to strengthen community-school partnerships.
- **Improving the performance of Middle and High Schools** to ensure greater numbers of youth of color make a successful transition from middle to high school, graduate in greater numbers, and are better prepared for success in colleges, universities, and their careers.
- **Improving retention and performance in College and University Systems** to ensure that the young men of color that do complete the A-G coursework, gain GEDs or diplomas, and are able to enter into colleges and universities are given the resources and support to continue their academic excellence and development and successfully complete higher education programs.

Better Health through Work

Policy changes are required to enable increased access to economic opportunities for boys and young men of color. Employment is a key focus of such policy concerns. Beyond working to develop new opportunities, it is also important to ensure increased access to existing public resources and benefits.

- **Improving and expanding Workforce Training Programs** to ensure a greater number of young men of color that leave high school without a diploma and men who are re-entering communities from jails and prison are offered *Second Chance* educational pathways to good-paying career ladder-oriented jobs in high-growth sectors.

Ensuring Access to School Health

The health status of California's boys and young men of color is directly impacted by school dropout rates, attendance, academic performance, and school district revenues. By carefully considering where and how to provide services, schools and policymakers can take immediate and low cost steps to improve the health of boys and young men of color and increase student academic achievement and graduation rates. Student health must be a key component in the ongoing discussion about school reform. In addition, to address the realities of trauma experienced by boys and young men of color, educational institutions need to incorporate this experience into their approach to these boys and young men.

- **Improve the ability of schools to identify and respond effectively to chronic trauma in young males of color.** Support school staff and school systems in expanding opportunities for services such as cognitive-behavioral therapy, counseling, support groups, mentoring, conflict and anger management training, gender-specific health services and other interventions that mitigate the impact of stress and trauma and help youth of color break the cycle of violence.

Creating a Healthy Neighborhood

Neighborhoods should have the following intended outcomes: residents live in communities with health-promoting land use, transportation, and community development; children and their families are safe from violence in their homes and neighborhoods; and neighborhood and school environments support improved health and healthy behaviors.

- **Expand and support community-school-police solutions to make schools and neighborhoods safer and shelter kids from violence and trauma.** Provide enriching after-school programs in safe haven environments for at-risk kids. Curb violent crime and firearm usage and access through legislative, administrative, and community interventions.
- **Work on long-term solutions for desegregating neighborhoods and schools, de-concentrating poverty, and helping people move to opportunity.**⁴⁴ Concentrated poverty, disadvantage, and unhealthy environments are profoundly impacting boys and men of color physically, mentally, and emotionally. Some school- and housing-based policy solutions do exist but better, higher-impact policy and system reforms are needed to properly address this disparity.
- **Improving outcomes through use of community programming and resources.** A number of policy advocates and community builders are engaged in important strategies that focus on different stages of male development and different parts of the state's education and workforce training system.

Policy and System Reforms that Can Make a Difference

Beyond strategic intervention points, there are broader policy and system reforms that can make a difference. These reform recommendations take into account the multiple touch points that a boy or young man of color may experience when accessing educational institutions throughout his life.

Key legislative and administrative actions are those that will:

- Reduce the use of harsh and extreme school policies and practices that disproportionately “push out” boys and young men of color and expand the use of common sense school discipline models that increase the participation and efficacy of boys and young men of color in California’s public schools.
- Expand the number of California public schools that adopt “full service” school models that engage community and other important partners in providing children and youth with the supports needed for healthy and social development in high-need neighborhoods.
- Increase the number and rates of highly qualified teachers in the California public schools that serve the greatest number of boys and young men of color. Similar steps could be taken to expand technical assistance and competitive grants to public schools and communities for professional development and training that increases the capacity of teachers, counselors, other school personnel, and community partners to effectively engage, serve, and educate boys and young men of color.
- Accelerate the adoption of school reforms, curriculum, and collaboration/partnerships that have demonstrated success improving academic achievement, graduation, college attendance, and workforce training among boys and young men of color. Such reforms should account for the urgent need to ensure the social science curriculum from Pre School to University includes the content, pedagogy, and leadership/service experience that are required to ensure the healthy development of young men of color into responsible and contributing members of their families, communities, and the greater society.
- Strengthen and expand community-school prevention efforts and ensure schools and neighborhoods are safe and free from violence.
- Lead to the adoption of an equity-based school finance approach in which allocation of state and federal funds accounts for the scale and diversity of needs boys and young men of color encounter as they move through our public school system. This restructuring of school finance policies would need to account for the actual cost of preparing students for college and careers in high-need neighborhoods and would be reflected in basic state reimbursement rates and in allocation of competitive grant programs.

Employment and Wealth Policy Brief

Californians currently face a double-digit unemployment rate. Our state's future prosperity and health depends on all Californians having a fair chance to thrive and succeed, including young people who are entering the economy at a difficult time. As the state becomes increasingly diverse, it will be especially critical to nurture and harness the talent, skills, and hope of young people of color – and boys and young men of color in particular.

Young men of color face the highest unemployment rates in the state and nation. In November 2009, the *Washington Post* reported that 34.5 percent of young African-American males, aged 16-24, were jobless — a rate more than three times the national unemployment level of 10 percent.⁴⁵ In California during that month, unemployment rates topped 15 percent among Latino males and 17 percent among African-American males. Though educated males of color are faring better than lesser-educated young men, they remain unemployed at rates nearly twice that of college-educated Caucasian males, according to the *New York Times*.⁴⁶ In 2011, these numbers continue to endure. Increasing employment among these males should be a priority of local and state policymakers in their efforts to get the economy moving and increasing productivity in California.

Given these disproportionately high rates of unemployment among males of color, increasing employment among this population will have a considerably positive impact on lowering California's rate of unemployment. While a vital starting point, improving employment and wages for these males is necessary but not enough. There is a strategic opportunity to integrate savings and asset-building interventions with workforce development for lesser-skilled males.

High incarceration rates are one contributing factor to the lack of young men of color remaining engaged in either the education system or the workforce. In California, 30.5 percent of 15- to 24-year-old males in juvenile facilities were African-American even though African-Americans comprise only seven percent of those age groups in the state. Latinos are also over-represented in juvenile facilities; while Latinos account for 45 percent of the state's 15- to 24-year-olds, they make up 53.6 percent of youth in juvenile facilities.

It is this disconnection from community, school or family that is being shown to be a more insidious factor. In 2007, almost one in 10 Latino and one in six African-American males between 16 and 25 years of age were “disconnected”: incarcerated, out of work or out of school. Latinos are two times more likely to be out of school, out of the labor force or incarcerated than non-Hispanic whites and African-Americans are three times more likely than whites to be out of the labor force or incarcerated.

As our country and our state struggle to recover from the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression, business leaders warn that our economic recovery, competitiveness, and prospects for sustained prosperity will depend on having a highly education and trained workforce. Given their growing numbers here in California, the imperative to prepare young men of color for success in the workplace and in the marketplace cannot be overstated. To achieve this, improvements will be required in our public education and workforce systems.

⁴⁵ Haynes, Dion V. “Blacks Hit Hard by Economy's Punch.” *The Washington Post*, November 24, 2009. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/11/23/AR2009112304092.html>

⁴⁶ Luo, Michael. “In Job Hunt, College Degree Can't Close Racial Gap.” *The New York Times*, November 30, 2009. http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/01/us/01race.html?_r=1&ref=us

Claiming the Promise of Health & Success for Boys and Men of Color

This issue brief includes important data points and facts, identifies strategic intervention points, and provides examples of policy and system reforms that can improve the numbers of young men of color that successfully complete workforce and career oriented high school programs, community colleges, and other workforce training programs that lead to good jobs and careers.

Fast Facts

The numbers below tell a grim story. Yet there is hope and promise because we do know what works and there are successful programs emerging across the state and country that can be built upon as detailed in the Strategic Intervention Points and Policy and Systems Reform sections.

The percentage of young men working across all racial groups has declined dramatically in less than a decade. In 2002, 41 percent of African American men, 78 percent of Hispanic men, and 60 percent of white men ages 16 to 24 were working (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2002). According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, in January 2010 only 28 percent of black men between the ages of 16 and 24 were working, compared with 43 percent of Hispanic men and 44 percent of white men in the same age category.

- While unemployment in CA (consistently between 11-12 percent) has run higher than the national average from the beginning of the current economic crisis, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, minority unemployment has been even higher as Latino unemployment is 14.7%, African American unemployment in the state is a staggering 19.5% compared to 11.9% for White Californians⁴⁷ African-American and Latino young men fared the worst with higher levels of unemployment in statewide and most regions of the state than other demographics. For example, in 2010, unemployment was as high as 45 percent for 16-24 year old African-American young men in Alameda and close to 20 percent for Latino Young men in Fresno. African-American young men had the highest unemployment rate in these two regions.⁴⁸
- As young men of color struggle to secure jobs, good paying or otherwise, successful attainment of post-secondary education, including workforce certificates and four year college degrees, have become the gateway to economic security. The aggregate demand for workers with post-secondary education and training is expanding every year. Between 2008 and 2018, demand for workers with postsecondary education will rise by 13 percent in California, while demand for other workers will grow more slowly at 9.1 percent.
- Between 2008 and 2018, state labor demand will increase over twice as much for college educated workers (1,327,000 additional jobs) as for high school graduates and dropouts (614,000 additional jobs); and by 2018, 61 percent of jobs in California (and nearly two-thirds of jobs in the nation) will require some postsecondary education or training.
- This is a problem for the alarmingly large numbers of young Californians that drop out of our public high schools or graduate unprepared for post-secondary education and training. A recent PolicyLink workforce study found that at the close of the 2006-07 academic year, only 126,516 (roughly 32 percent) of 356,641 high-school graduates were UC/ CSU eligible. About 58 percent of high-school graduates (230,125 students) did not meet these requirements. In that same year, the adjusted high school dropout numbers for grades 9–12 indicated that 109,011 students had left high school without a degree. The number of high-school dropouts and those who graduate unprepared to enter California’s four-year colleges and universities each year represent approximately 340,000 young women and men entering the states’ very competitive labor market without the skills to

⁴⁷ PolicyLink Analysis; U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Quarter 2, 2011 data.

⁴⁸ Interview with Gay Cobb, Executive Director of Oakland Private Industry Council.

Claiming the Promise of Health & Success for Boys and Men of Color

compete. With consistently the highest dropout rates, the lowest college-going rates and similarly lower numbers of involvement and completion of workforce training programs, young men of color face the greatest challenges competing in our hyper competitive regional labor markets.

- Economic security for boys and young men of color is a problem that includes the quality of their education and the jobs they hold, but extends well beyond those sectors and is interconnected with everything from the concentration of poverty in their communities to homeownership and United States social policy. The assets gap for boys and men of color is about the success and well being of their families and households. A recent study by the Institute on Assets and Social Policy noted that the racial assets gap between White and African-American families has more than quadrupled over the course of a generation, from \$20,000 - \$95,000. The amount of this gap is enough to pay full tuition at a four-year public university for two children, plus tuition at a public medical school. Essentially, the gap is opportunity denied and assures racial economic inequality for the next generation.⁴⁹
- Data from the Pew Research Center underscores the fact that households of color were hit hardest by the Great Recession. While the economic downturn affected all Americans, its impact was not evenly distributed across racial groups or communities.⁵⁰ Households representing families of color saw significantly greater losses of wealth than White households. The cause for such precipitous declines in the wealth of families of color can be found in the housing crisis. For Hispanics, there has been a 66 percent decrease in household median net worth while there has been little over a one-half decrease for Asians (54 percent) and African Americans (53 percent) compared to Caucasian households who experienced 16 percent decrease in median net worth. Pew Center researchers suggest that many minority households were dependent on home equity for wealth and that their total loss in net worth came from declining levels of home equity.⁵¹ Furthermore, “the share of households with zero or negative net worth is much higher among Hispanics and blacks. About one-third of Hispanics (31 percent) and blacks (35 percent) had no wealth or were in debt in 2009, compared with 15 percent of whites. The increase in the share of households with zero or negative net worth from 2005 to 2009 was greatest among minority households. It increased from 23 percent to 31 percent for Hispanics, from 12 percent to 19 percent for Asians, and from 29 percent to 35 percent for blacks”.⁵²

⁴⁹Shapiro, Thomas, Meschede, Tatjana, and Sullivan, Laura. “Research and Policy Brief: The Racial Wealth Gap Increases Fourfold.” Institute on Assets and Social Policy: Heller School for Social Policy and Management at Brandeis, May 2010.

⁵⁰ <http://pewsocialtrends.org/2011/07/26/wealth-gaps-rise-to-record-highs-between-whites-blacks-hispanics/#executive-summary>

⁵¹ <http://pewsocialtrends.org/2011/07/26/wealth-gaps-rise-to-record-highs-between-whites-blacks-hispanics/#executive-summary>

⁵² <http://pewsocialtrends.org/2011/07/26/wealth-gaps-rise-to-record-highs-between-whites-blacks-hispanics/#executive-summary>

Strategic Intervention Points

To respond to these urgent challenges the state should commit to an ambitious set of strategic objectives that directly respond to the scale and multi-faceted nature of the job crisis young men of color and the state are experiencing. Setting specific goals for increasing employment among young men of color would be the first step in a strategy that engages all stakeholders that are essential to removing barriers to harnessing their talent and assets.

Proposed Goal: Over the next decade the state will significantly increase the numbers of young men (16-24 year olds) and men of color that are prepared for and secure jobs that pay family sustaining wages, provide good benefits, and real career advancement in high growth industry sectors that are critical to California's regional and state economy. More specifically, the state will marshal public and private leadership and existing resources to increase high school graduation rates of young men of color, marketable skills sets of those who graduate, the number of graduates that are eligible for colleges, universities, and the numbers that are prepared to succeed in post-secondary workforce training programs.

Achieving these objectives will not necessarily require significant increases in public spending, if a consensus can be reached to prioritize young men of color in the existing workforce system. At minimum this will require that the state:

- **Expand supports community colleges provide to young men of color** in basic education, workforce pathway programs, and other academic programs that serve as on-ramps to high demand labor market sectors that offer real career advancement.
- **Align and strengthen the workforce development programs** (e.g. career technical high schools, pre-apprenticeship, community colleges, and youth workforce programs) that can serve as pathways to careers in high demand sectors at the regional level.
- **Increase or redirect existing public investment to the workforce education and training programs that have been proven to work as pathways for young men of color to middle skills jobs in high growth sectors.** Middle skills jobs are career ladder oriented jobs that can be attained with relatively low educational attainment but that require post secondary training that is less than a bachelor's degree to advance to higher levels in their careers.
- **Increase the numbers of male high school students of color between the ages of 16-24 that are connected to career pathway programs that have adopted the program practices that yield higher numbers of graduates with high value postsecondary credentials and degree.** Postsecondary pathways are the integrated set of activities, interventions, and supports that lead youth to attain certificates, credentials, licenses, and degrees that have demonstrable value in the labor market. These programs include academically rigorous multiple pathway CTE high schools, community college workforce training programs like Career Advancement Academies, and labor/industry pre-apprenticeship programs. Navigating these career pathways can be challenging for local youth and adults. The state should encourage and incentivize the sponsors of these programs to better coordinate and manage the entry and progress of young men of color through these local and regional pathways.

Claiming the Promise of Health & Success for Boys and Men of Color

- **Expand the numbers of workforce training providers and systems that adopt best practices that have proven to improve outcomes for young men of color.** California is home to some the nation's best youth development oriented workforce bridge programs, including affiliates of national organizations like YouthBuild, Conservation and Americorps and a great number of locally grown efforts like Oakland's Green Job Corp; these program models and best practices should be promoted as standard program practices the state and local workforce investment funders require of programs that seek their funding.
- **Remove system barriers young men of color face as they move into the working world.** According to an analysis by researchers at the National Employment Law Project conducted in 2008, nearly one in three adults in the United States (31.7 percent) were estimated to have a criminal record on file with the states that will show up on a routine criminal background check. As is expected, when U.S. incarceration rates continue to increase, so do the number of people with a record of criminal history. And those with a criminal history are impacted by the more frequent use of background checks. Nationally, background checks are one of the foremost systemic barriers limiting people with criminal records from gainfully participating in the regular labor market. The severity of this is amplified by racial, ethnic, and gender disparities both in the criminal justice system and among workers with criminal records. Men of color, particularly African American men, have higher incarceration rates and, as people with criminal records, tend to have a harder time finding work and earning equal pay when compared to their white counterparts. Addressing these inequities requires innovative strategies at all levels of government.⁵³
- **Increase the number of public agencies that adopt targeted hiring policies and programs that specify goals for hiring of young men of color with multiple barriers to employment.** Large scale, publicly funded infrastructure projects and contracts for public services offer important leverage points for state and local government departments and agencies that are engaged in this new state effort that would not require any new expenditures; the state's implementation of healthcare access system is another such opportunity that could result in greater numbers of men working in the health sector.
- **Expand the numbers of effective community economic development programs and social enterprises that serve as first employers to BMOG that have historically faced barriers to employment.** Even as other private and public employers have resisted employing young men of color, community-led social enterprises have demonstrated remarkable success working with young men, particularly those with multiple barriers to employment (including low educational attainment and prior convictions).

⁵³ National Employment Law Project and Ella Baker Center for Human Rights, PolicyLink. "Expanding Opportunity: Employing the Formerly Incarcerated in the Green Economy, July 2010.

Policy & System Reforms that Can Make a Difference

As noted, succeeding in the goal of moving greater numbers of young men of color from unemployment, under employment or employment in low-wage occupations will require greater coordination and effectiveness of existing workforce education and training programs. No one state or local agency can unilaterally ensure success. The following recommendations represent steps that the legislature, governor, and the heads of our public education and workforce systems can take in the short run. In the long run, policy and system reforms to improve the effectiveness of the state's post-secondary system will have to be addressed—and the needs of boys and men of color will need to be at the center of such reforms.

To increase state and local investment in the career workforce pathway programs suggested in this issue brief:

- The Governor could use his 15 percent discretionary Workforce Investment Act funds and direct state workforce department heads to encourage local workforce boards to do the same.
- The legislature and the governor could mandate greater support for at risk 16-24 year olds in career technical education high school programs that lead to jobs in high growth and high wage sectors e.g. SB x1x, which Governor Brown recently signed to provide additional monies for Green focused CTE High Schools that work with this population.
- The Community College Chancellor could continue and expand support for Career Advancement Academies that serve this population.

To increase adoption of the best education and program practices from high school through the state's post-secondary system:

- The legislature, the governor, superintendent of schools, and the heads of the three higher education segments should explicitly commit the states' public education and workforce system to improving access and completion rates for boys and young men of color in state funded career pathway workforce education and training programs.
- These public commitments should be followed up with leadership to ensure boys and young men are accounted for in any existing system reforms to improve efficacy (for example, the Community College Student Success Task Force mandated by the legislature and governor). Meanwhile, the legislature and governor could mandate tracking and a commitment to improving success rates for young men of color in the states' implementation of all training that is funded by the Workforce Investment Act. This accountability step would encourage local Workforce Investment Boards to examine steps toward the goal.

To increase the use of local and targeted hiring:

- The legislature and governor could direct all state departments and agencies to improve the expansion of these economic opportunity policies when they are already mandated and/or encouraged by a number of major federal infrastructure programs (e.g., the Department of Transportation's Highway program funds or HUD's Section 3).
- Establish an economic opportunity policy that includes local and targeted hiring for all state funded infrastructure projects, like those that have been adopted by local community

Claiming the Promise of Health & Success for Boys and Men of Color

redevelopment agencies (Los Angeles), school districts (Oakland), and community colleges (Los Angeles).

Safety Policy Brief

Recent research confirms what we intuitively know: children and adolescents need parenting until they are fully mature.⁵⁴ Many children, however, most obviously children in the foster care or juvenile justice systems, have been removed from the people who would most naturally parent them. Unfortunately neither of these systems approaches care for custody of these children from a developmentally or trauma-informed parenting perspective. This is especially true for boys and young men of color. These children receive inadequate or no effective parenting at critical developmental points and are influenced more by peers than caring adults. The result is an increase in violent behavior, school failure, inability to connect with others, and unaddressed health and mental health needs. Without addressing the parenting of children in these systems generally, and boys and young men of color specifically, California will never effectively stem the epidemic of youth violence.

Examples of inadequate parenting in the foster care and juvenile justice systems abound. Children and youth in both systems are placed in group homes with staff that are ill-informed about both the impact of trauma and developmental stages. As a substitute for effective parenting, staff use unsophisticated, untargeted, and ultimately ineffectual “behavior modification systems” which are little more than a complex system of punishments and restrictions. Youth who have been involved in criminal activity are housed in juvenile facilities with staff whose main, if not exclusive, focus is on immediate behavior control and security rather than on uncovering the roots of this behavior and making a long-term change. Children with serious mental health needs languish in shelter or detention until some program agrees to take them. Rarely does any program provide a trauma-informed age-appropriate response. Although foster parents and kin may provide excellent parenting, there is currently no formal structure to ensure that this happens consistently. The focus is on “maintaining the placement” rather than ensuring healthy development.

This brief provides a statistical snapshot of the disproportionate impact that the juvenile/adult criminal justice and foster care systems have on the lives of boys and young men of color and then identifies strategic intervention points and goals that should be considered. Lastly, the brief outlines specific policy and system reforms that can improve how juvenile justice and foster care intersects with the lives of boys of color.

⁵⁴ See, E.R. Devore and K.R. Ginsburg, *The Protective Effects of a Good Parenting on Adolescents*, Current Opinion in Pediatrics, Vol. 17, No. 4 (Aug 2005) for a review of relevant literature.

Fast Facts

The numbers below tell a grim story. Yet there is hope and promise because we do know what works and there are successful programs emerging across the state and country that can be built on, as detailed in the Strategic Intervention Points and Policy and Systems Reform sections.

- In 2009, 71 percent of children in foster care in California were black and Latino. In fact, a larger percentage of the children in foster care are black (23.4 percent) than white (21.5 percent) even though there are more than 11 times as many white children in California as black children.⁵⁵
- Children of color, particularly boys, are subject to more punitive sanctions at virtually every stage of formal processing throughout the juvenile justice system from arrest to incarceration. For example, when white youth and black youth without any prior admissions to juvenile facilities were charged with the same offense, black youth were six times more likely to be incarcerated than white youth, while Latino youth were three times more likely.⁵⁶ In California, African Americans comprise just 7 percent of the state's youth population, yet in 2009 they represented fully 17 percent of juvenile arrests, 26 percent of juvenile detentions, and 26 percent of juveniles admitted to state prison. Similarly, Latinos comprised 47 percent of California youth in 2007, but represented 54 percent of arrests, 50 percent of juvenile detentions, and 63 percent of juveniles admitted to state prison.⁵⁷
- The California juvenile justice system, along with the criminal justice system more broadly, is often the primary institution for responding to youth with mental health disorders. In fact, it is generally accepted that between 40 and 70 percent of youth in the California juvenile justice system have a mental disorder or illness.⁵⁸ However, the juvenile justice system is ill-equipped to respond to this burgeoning need. According to a 2005 California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) survey of county probation departments, inadequate mental health services are "the single most critical gap in juvenile justice services." Sadly, it is estimated that California spends more than \$10 million each year to house youth in DJJ detention facilities in part because necessary mental health services are unavailable in youth's communities.⁵⁹
- The passage of Proposition 21 in California in 2000 eliminated the need for prosecutors who sought to try juveniles in adult court to initially file such cases in juvenile court. Since its passage, prosecutors have been able to "direct file" juvenile cases in adult court resulting in a sharp increase in adult criminal prosecutions for youth offenders. Between 2003 and 2009, "direct file" juvenile cases rose from 410 to 769, an 88 percent increase. Crucially, children of color comprise the lion's share of these cases with African American youth in 2009 representing 26 percent of all cases and

⁵⁵ The Children's Defense Fund (2011). *The State of America's Children*. Available for download at <http://www.childrensdefense.org/child-research-data-publications/data/state-of-americas-2011.pdf>

⁵⁶ *Reducing Racial Disparities in Juvenile Detention* (2001) Eleanor Hoytt et al., Annie E. Casey Foundation, available at <http://www.aecf.org/upload/publicationfiles/reducing%20racial%20disparities.pdf>

⁵⁷ "Let's Hear it For the Boys: Building a Stronger America by Investing in Boys and Young Men of Color" in *Changing Places: How Communities Will Improve the Health of Boys of Color (2009)*, University of California Press, Berkeley. Juvenile Justice in California 2009 (2010), California Department of Justice, Division of California Justice Information Services Bureau of Criminal Information and Analysis, Criminal Justice Statistics Center available at <http://ag.ca.gov/cjsc/pubs.php#juvenileJustice>. Prison admissions were tabulated from Data Table 31, pp. 91-94

⁵⁸ *Mental Health Issues in California's Juvenile Justice System*, (2010) Berkeley Center for Criminal Justice, U.C. Berkeley School of Law

⁵⁹ United States House of Representatives Committee on Government Reform, 2005 cited in *Mental Health Issues in California's Juvenile Justice System*, BCCJ (2010)

Claiming the Promise of Health & Success for Boys and Men of Color

Latino youth representing 57 percent.⁶⁰ Youth transferred to adult court not only receive longer sentences than those sentenced to juvenile court for the same crimes, but their resulting criminal record cannot be sealed as occurs in juvenile proceedings.⁶¹ The result is that affected youth are hamstrung early in life with a felony conviction and its concomitant reduction in employment and housing prospects, as well as potential ineligibility for federal financial aid for higher education. Numerous studies, moreover, have found that transferring youth to adult court actually increases recidivism. A study by the Task Force on Community Preventive Services found that youth offenders who are prosecuted in adult criminal court are 34 percent more likely to be re-arrested for a violent offense than youth committing comparable crimes that were retained in the juvenile justice court system.⁶²

- The number of youth sentenced to serve terms in adult prisons in California increased from 107 in 2003 to 356 in 2009, an increase of over 330 percent. Of the youth sentenced to adult prison in 2009, 89 percent were boys and young men of color.^{63 64}
- While a substantial number of youth in California are detained at the facilities of the DJJ, an even larger number are incarcerated in California adult prisons. More than 2,000 males ages 18 to 19 were incarcerated in state prisons in 2010. There were 20,696 males in the system between the ages of 18 and 24 in 2010, comprising 13 percent of the male prison population. While we currently lack data on the specific racial demographics of this young male population, we do know that of the 163,000 inmates in California Correctional facilities in 2010, 65 percent were Latino and African-American males.^{65 66}
- Each year in California, about 130,000 children and youth are released from a period of confinement in a juvenile justice or probation facility. Approximately 110,000 go home directly after a brief stay in juvenile hall; roughly 20,000 are released after serving an average of 9-12 months in county probation facilities and group homes, and more than 1,500 return from stays averaging 3 years in a state facility of the Department of Juvenile Justice.⁶⁷ However, California counties lack widespread and high quality “aftercare” services for youth after they are released from these facilities, often with significant mental health disorders.

⁶⁰ *Improving Juvenile Justice Policy in California: A Closer Look at Transfer Laws' Impact on Young Men & Boys of Color* (2011) Berkeley Center for Criminal Justice, U.C. Berkeley School of Law

⁶¹ R. Redding, (2010), *Juvenile Transfer Laws: An Effective Deterrent to Delinquency?* Office of Justice Programs, US Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

⁶² *Improving Juvenile Justice Policy in California* (2011)

⁶³ *Improving Juvenile Justice Policy in California* (2011) and *Juvenile Justice in California, 2003-2009* available at <http://ag.ca.gov/cjsc/pubs.php#juvenileJustice>

⁶⁴ *Juvenile Justice in California, 2009* (2010)

⁶⁵ Prison Census Data as of December 31, 2010, Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Offender Information Services Branch, February 2011. Available at

http://www.cdcr.ca.gov/Reports_Research/Offender_Information_Services_Branch/index.html

⁶⁶ Ibid

⁶⁷ California Juvenile Justice Reentry Partnership brochure available at <http://www.cjci.org/files/CJRPBrochure.pdf>

Strategic Intervention Points

At every stage of formal processing in the juvenile justice system from arrest to confinement, boys and young men of color, particularly black males, are more aggressively punished than their white peers. This results in a stark overrepresentation of young males of color in the juvenile and criminal justice systems with significant consequences for their lives. While it is true that young males of color commit serious crimes at a higher rate than their white peers, racially biased punitive policies produce a significant portion of racial disparities in youth incarceration. The following represents strategic points for intervening in the formal processing of youth offenders to help mitigate these disparities and the deleterious effects of exposure to the criminal justice system.

Improve parenting for boys and young men of color

- Improve intensive parenting for boys and young men of color both outside of, and within, juvenile and foster care systems.

Reduce the amount of boys of color in the criminal justice pipeline

- Reduce disproportionate minority contact with police agencies and juvenile justice authorities that dramatically increase the likelihood that boys and young men of color will be harassed, arrested, and incarcerated, particularly for drug offenses.
- Provide better access to legal representation for boys and young men of color.
- Reduce the number of youth directly filed to adult court and ultimately sentenced to prison.

Better response to youth needs through community-based and trauma-informed approaches

- Decrease the number of youth who are incarcerated in youth detention and divert them to community-based programs providing an effective continuum of services.
- Provide mental health assessment and trauma-informed responses at the earliest point of contact for youth in the juvenile justice system to determine whether they have mental health needs and how best to match those needs with available services.

Create more effective pathways for youth reintegration

- Improve the pathways for reentry following a period of detention in juvenile justice facilities or state prisons for young offenders.

Policy and Systems Reforms that Can Make a Difference

Beyond strategic intervention points, there are broader policy and system reforms that can make a difference. These reform recommendations take into account the multiple touch points that a boy or young man of color may experience when accessing institutions throughout his life.

Make trauma-informed care a core principle of the Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare Systems.

Amend the current intent statutes of the juvenile justice and child welfare systems (Sections 300 and 600 of the Welfare and Institutions Code) to include the provision of trauma-informed parenting as one of the goals of the juvenile justice and child welfare systems. This would counter the increasingly punitive language passed in the last decade and a half and create a legal “hook” for advocates seeking to develop a parenting orientation to services.

Provide support for more effective parenting of boys and young men of color.

In targeted communities, offer technical assistance to modify conditions of confinement or move children to less restrictive settings so they can receive intensive parenting and are not housed with potentially violent wards. Provide technical assistance on the use of Title IV-E funds to subsidize placement and training. Also, there is significant research documenting the importance of fathers in the lives of children. Absence of a father is correlated with increased risk for negative outcomes in adulthood. In the past, efforts to address concerns about absent fathers have taken a sociological approach.⁶⁸ Increasing the connection between fathers and their children is one of the most critical steps toward reducing youth involvement with violence as both perpetrators and victims. In addition, the research cited here has shown that as fathers became more involved with their children, their own problematic behaviors were reduced. So it is likely that programs to address teen fathering will not only help the children but also the young fathers.

Provide training on trauma-informed care to juvenile judges, attorneys, and systems staff.

Build off of the experience of community practitioners with saturation efforts to change not only specific policy and practice but the philosophy of public and private systems. Shift training funding provided by state and local public safety and social services agencies to work with widely diverse and influential groups, such as: the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, the American Bar Association, the Youth Law Center, the Child Welfare League, the California affiliates of American Public Human Services Association, and the Court Appointed Special Advocates Association. Trainings within these entities should focus on family preservation as an outcome and in a way that shifts their culture and practice toward families of color.

Create enforceable state standards for county-level alternatives to detention.

Pursue legislative and administration actions to provide a more effective continuum of juvenile justice services at the county level. California should establish statewide standards and regulations, based on successful local models (e.g., the Missouri model as adopted for James Ranch in Santa Clara County), to ensure a consistent level of quality in county juvenile justice services. The state should also ensure adequate time and cost-sharing for counties to effectively implement a comprehensive array of diversion programs and longer-term detention capacities. The staff of juvenile justice agencies should also receive mandatory training in disparity issues as a requirement to receive state and federal juvenile

⁶⁸ Cowan, Pruett, Pruett and Wong, *Promoting Fathers' Engagement With Children: Preventive Interventions for Low-Income Families*, *Journal of Marriage and Family* 71 (August 2009): 663 – 679.

Claiming the Promise of Health & Success for Boys and Men of Color

justice funding. To support this requirement, each county should be required to analyze its own issues related to boys and young men of color and submit remedial plans.

Review and reform laws that impose racially biased gang-related sentencing enhancements like the Street Terrorism Enforcement and Prevention Act (STEP) which applies overwhelmingly to boys and young men of color. These laws result in young males of color receiving significantly longer sentences than white juveniles for the same offense. Law enforcement agencies, particularly gang task forces, frequently label many juveniles of color as gang members with no evidence of gang involvement and likewise refuse to label white juvenile groups as gangs even if they clearly meet the provisions of the STEP Act.⁶⁹

Expand community-based alternatives to detention, especially ones like the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI), which has substantially reduced disproportionate minority contact in Santa Cruz and Ventura Counties. As of August 2009, 110 local jurisdictions in 27 states have active JDAI programs.⁷⁰

Counties should provide non-incarceration options to handle warrant and probation failures to reduce the amount of boys and young men of color unnecessarily held in detention.

Create an effective and reliable system for responding to juvenile mental health issues. A number of state-level and county-level reforms are needed to create an effective and reliable system for assessing the mental health of youth who come in contact with the juvenile and criminal justice system and matching them with high-quality mental health services. This entails creating universal practical definitions for mental health disorders that are correlated with DSM-IV diagnoses in order to standardize the application of effective treatment modalities; collecting assessment data in a consistent way across counties; and using validated screening and assessment instruments that are both culturally competent and responsive to gender. Ultimately, county systems should properly assess the mental health needs of youth at the earliest point of contact and then match those youth with the least intrusive and most effective interventions that also maximize public safety. A range of proven community-based intensive therapies includes Functional Family Therapy and Multi-Systemic Therapy, among others. California should also support greater cross-agency collaboration and capacity improvement similar to the *Healthy Returns Initiative* launched in 2005 in Los Angeles, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz and Ventura Counties. HRI led to the improvement in probation and officer recognition of mental disorders and increased the connection between youth and appropriate mental health services.⁷¹

Explore the use of Medicaid to support in-home/community-based mental health treatment. Work with the Quality Parenting Program, Chief Probation Officers of California (CPOC), County Welfare Directors Association (CWDA), the California Department of Social Services (CDSS), and the California

⁶⁹ Brian W. Ludeke, *Malibu Locals Only: "Boys Will Be Boys," or Dangerous Street Gang? Why the Criminal Justice System's Failure to Properly Identify Suburban Gangs Hurts Efforts to Fight Gangs*, 43 CAL. W. L. REV. 309, 345–46 (2007); Linda S. Beres & Thomas D. Griffith, "Gangs, Schools, and Stereotypes", 37 LOY. L.A. L. REV. 935, 949–50 (2004); Sara Lynn Van Hofwegen, "Unjust and Ineffective: A Critical Look at California's Step Act", *Southern California Interdisciplinary Law Journal*, Volume 18, Number 3, Spring 2009, 679

⁷⁰ *Two Decades of JDAI: From Demonstration Project to National Standard* (2009) Annie E. Casey Foundation

⁷¹ *Healthy Returns Initiative: Strengthening Mental Health Services in the Juvenile Justice System: A Final Evaluation Report by the National Council on Crime and Delinquency* (2010) The National Council on Crime and Delinquency

Claiming the Promise of Health & Success for Boys and Men of Color

Health and Human Services Agency to develop policies to require trauma-informed training for all caregivers including foster families, kinship caregivers, group home, and institutional staff.

Revise detention practices to ensure youth of color receive fair and equitable treatment while detained. Require training for guards and administrators to develop understanding and unique skills to engage youth with a special emphasis on working with those who have been chronically exposed to community and institutional violence. Encourage counties to use a risk-assessment screening tool with a racial/ethnic lens for all youth to ensure myriad educational, mental health, and developmental needs are met. Conduct a system-wide evaluation of youth complaints against guards/administrators to analyze patterns of conduct and inform training practices.

Create effective aftercare approaches for successful youth reentry following confinement. Cost savings generated from the realignment of the juvenile justice system, as well as the broader criminal justice system, should be reallocated to support, among other things, effective aftercare programs for youth released from juvenile detention. California should support the testing and application of successful models for juvenile justice aftercare at the local level in the areas of assessment, step-down placements, pre-release planning, probation, and court supervision. This could entail approaches such as creating a best practices clearinghouse, offering incentive grants, and implementing supportive regulations. The state and localities should also support effective programs for reintegrating young adults who have been incarcerated back into the labor force. One such program, the Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) based in New York City, is a transitional jobs program designed to help former prisoners increase longer-term employment and reduce recidivism. A recent random-assignment impact evaluation of CEO conducted by MDRC found that the program significantly reduced re-arrest and reconviction for participants and, in particular, had its strongest reductions in recidivism for former prisoners who were at highest risk of recidivism.⁷²

⁷² Janine Zweig et al., (2010) Recidivism Effects of the Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) Program Vary by Former Prisoners' Risk of Reoffending <http://www.mdrc.org/publications/574/full.pdf>

Youth Development Policy Brief

One of the best investments we can make in California's future prosperity is to be certain that we are doing everything possible to help young people become healthy, productive adults. As California becomes increasingly diverse, it will be especially critical to nurture and harness the talent, skills and hope of young people of color – and boys and young men of color in particular.

Youth development is a process for preparing young people to be successful in meeting the challenges of adolescence and adulthood by helping them develop socially, emotionally, physically, and cognitively.⁷³ For boys and young men of color who are struggling within failing systems, or have fallen off the pathway to success altogether, effective youth development opportunities through local programs and state policy are indispensable for assuring their successful transition into adulthood.

In California, far too many young men of color will reach age 25 without having successfully transitioned to independent adulthood. At an age when most young adults are benefiting from fulltime work and close interpersonal relationships, these youth will not have connected to the labor force and most will lack social support systems. An overwhelming majority will be males of color; of these, over half will be in prison, while the remaining young men will be mired in protracted spells of long-term unemployment. Almost all of these youth will have spent their childhoods in families at the lowest level of the income distribution and will likely spend much of their own adult lives in poverty, unemployed or marginally employed. From an educational, economic and social perspective, these young people will be "disconnected".⁷⁴

Virtually all youth not connected by their twenties begin the process of disconnection much earlier, most often in adolescence. In our society, almost all youth require support until they have connected successfully with the labor force, which generally does not occur until their mid-twenties. Most young adults experience detours on the road to independence which include periods of unemployment and periodic interruptions in their education. The majority of youth are embedded in networks—families, friends, and communities—that provide guidance, support, and help, both financial and otherwise, when they face the crises that are an inevitable part of the transition. Quite the opposite is true for most disconnected youth, particularly if they are male. These youth have extremely limited support systems, including family support, to help them through the difficult transition to adulthood.

This brief provides a statistical snapshot of the youth development context and outcomes for boys and young men of color, particularly disconnected males, as well as strategic intervention points and goals that should be considered for improving their lives. Lastly, the brief outlines specific policy and system reforms that can improve youth development prospects for boys of color by fostering meaningful connections to pathways of success and preventing disconnection.

⁷³ Lisa K. Foster et al. (2005) *Involving Youth in Policymaking and Coordinating Youth Policy: State-Level Structures in California and Other States*. California Research Bureau.

⁷⁴ Brett Brown et al. (2003) *A Portrait of Well-being in Early Adulthood: A Report to the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation*. Child Trends. Available at <http://www.hewlett.org/uploads/files/APortraitofWellBeinginEarlyAdulthood.pdf>. In this report, Brown and colleagues define youth not in school, not in the labor force, not married, and not disabled as disconnected or disengaged.

Fast Facts

The numbers below tell a grim story. Yet there is hope and promise because we do know what works and there are successful programs emerging across the state and country that can be built on, as detailed in the Strategic Intervention Points and Policy and Systems Reform sections.

- In the U.S., one in twenty black children and more than one in four Latino children live in California. Together they comprised nearly 60 percent of the state's children in 2009.⁷⁵
- In 2007, 11 percent of Latinos and 12 percent of blacks between the ages of 16 and 19 were not working or in school compared to 6 percent of non-Hispanic whites.⁷⁶
- Among young males of color between the ages of 16 and 24 that are not enrolled in school, less than half have jobs and roughly a third are in prison or jail or on probation or parole.⁷⁷
- In California from 2006-2007 almost one in two black and Latino males did not graduate from high school compared to less than one in four white males.⁷⁸ Importantly, the dropout problem is heavily concentrated in particular schools and types of schools. According to data from the California Department of Education, one hundred high schools that enroll just 11 percent of all students in the state were responsible for 41 percent of California's dropouts in 2005-2006.⁷⁹ In addition, the economic costs of California's dropout problem are massive. It is estimated that for each cohort of 120,000 young adults each year that become part of the population that will never complete high school, they will cost the state \$46.4 billion in total economic losses over their lifetimes.⁸⁰
- In 2008, for black male high school dropouts under age 35, around 25 percent were employed compared to 37 percent that were incarcerated. In fact, so much of the growth in incarceration over the last few decades has been concentrated among young men with very low levels of education, nearly 70 percent of black male high school dropouts born since the mid-1970s have prison records.⁸¹
- In 2010, one out of three blacks and one in five Latinos between the ages of 16 and 24 were unemployed compared to just under one in six whites.⁸²

⁷⁵ The Children's Defense Fund (2011) *The State of America's Children*. Available at <http://www.childrensdefense.org/child-research-data-publications/data/state-of-americas-2011.pdf>

⁷⁶ Adrienne Fernandes and Thomas Gabe (2009) *Disconnected Youth: A Look at 16- to 24-Year Olds Who Are Not Working or In School*, Congressional Research Service

⁷⁷ Peter Edelman et al (2006) *Reconnecting Disadvantaged Young Men*. Urban Institute.

⁷⁸ Russell Rumberger and Susan Rotermund, (2009) *Ethnic and Gender Differences in California High School Graduation Rates*, The California Dropout Research Project

⁷⁹ California Dropout Research Project (2008) *Solving California's Dropout Crisis: California Dropout Research Project Policy Committee Report*. Available at http://cdrp.ucsb.edu/pubs_policyreport.htm

⁸⁰ California Dropout Research Project (2008) *Solving California's Dropout Crisis: California Dropout Research Project Policy Committee Report*. Available at http://cdrp.ucsb.edu/pubs_policyreport.htm

⁸¹ Bruce Western and Becky Pettit (2010) "Incarceration and Social Inequality", Harvard University

⁸² Bureau of Labor Statistics (July 2010) *Employment and Unemployment Among Youth Summary*. Available at <http://bls.gov/news.release/youth.nr0.htm>

Claiming the Promise of Health & Success for Boys and Men of Color

- The number of homeless youth and children enrolled in California's public schools increased by 60 percent between 2007 and 2009 reaching more than 288,000 children and youth.⁸³

⁸³ The Children's Defense Fund (2011)

Strategic Intervention Points

Youth development programs and policies designed to serve the general population of adolescents or unemployed young adults are not likely to adequately serve the needs of those at highest risk of long-term disconnection. In response, there is a compelling need to create a system of support and opportunity for those youth who are least likely to make a successful transition by age 25. There are a handful of strategic points of intervention that California policymakers should prioritize to both reduce the likelihood of disconnection for young males of color as well recover youth who have become disconnected. High-leverage points of intervention to consider are to:

Prevent Disconnection

- Provide a rich array of targeted afterschool and out-of-school time development programs to keep boys of color on the pathway to success
- Provide mental health services for boys and young men of color, particularly those who suffer chronic trauma and its associated effects on psychosocial development

Re-Connect Youth Who have Become Disconnected

- Re-connect disconnected youth who have fallen off the pathway to success as a result of dropping out of school or being incarcerated

Policy and Systems Reforms that Can Make a Difference

Beyond strategic intervention points, there are broader policy and system reforms that can make a difference. These reform recommendations take into account the multiple touch points that a boy or young man of color may experience when accessing institutions throughout his life.

Create a coordinating body for youth programs and services across state agencies that effectively targets programs and services to boys and young men of color. California, unlike other states, does not have a formal state-level coordinating mechanism for programs and services across departments that target youth. The absence of comprehensive coordination across state agencies makes it extremely difficult to target youth programs and services to more effectively serve boys and young men of color in a targeted way. California should create a coordinating body within the Governor’s Office to coordinate its youth-serving programs and services across several agencies, similar to the voluntary interagency coordination around violence prevention known as the “Shifting the Focus” effort begun in 2000.⁸⁴

Reform school level accountability systems to reverse incentives for schools and service providers to shed/ “push out” their lowest performing, most troubled and most unhealthy kids in an effort to increase their test scores/outcomes. Much of the initial legislative work has been completed, but has yet to be implemented. In the California context, this involves supporting and monitoring implementation of recently enacted legislation (SB 219 and SB 651) that alters California’s school level accountability system to include graduation rates as opposed to simply test scores in the state’s annual assessment of schools. Because of the correlation between health indicators – and in particular behavioral health indicators – and school failure, this will also prevent schools from pushing out those students most in need of health services and instead encourage them to identify these students early and deliver primary and secondary prevention services to help them succeed.

Creation of incentives, data systems, and best practices to identify young people who are at highest risk for facing serious health, social, and academic problems. Applying the latest research on predictors of dropping out, districts and schools should be able to identify as early as fourth or fifth grade and definitely upon entry into high school, those students that face a very high risk of not graduating. Again, these are also the students most likely to go on to struggle with substance abuse, mental illness, and obesity. Once identified, these students should receive support to address their social and health needs, accelerate their learning, and get them back on track while remaining in the traditional (versus alternative) middle school and high school setting. The state education agency must provide the mandate as well as the technical and capacity building support to districts to allow them to systematically use the state’s longitudinal student information system to identify these students and match them to services. The education system, the social service, and the public health system must find innovative ways to share data and link resources in an effort to identify, as early as possible, those students at highest risk. Again, this work can build on recently enacted legislation in California that mandates annual reporting of the prevalence of early indicators of dropout and the state’s recently implemented longitudinal student data system.

Expand the adoption of a Community-based, Integrated Student Services Model in California public schools in order to meet the service and developmental needs of at-risk students identified. It is not enough that schools simply have the capacity to identify at-risk students. They also must be connected

⁸⁴ Shailushi Baxi and Rachel Davis (June 2001) *Shifting the Focus: An Interdisciplinary Approach to Advancing Violence Prevention in California*, Prevention Institute. Available at http://thrive.preventioninstitute.org/pdf/STF_Hearings_Report.pdf

Claiming the Promise of Health & Success for Boys and Men of Color

to those resources in the community that can help these students to be healthy and stay connected. School systems cannot do this alone; they must find ways to leverage the resources of their community and other public systems through partnerships. In order to ensure 1) that appropriate prevention services are being provided for all students throughout their educational career and 2) that the highest risk students are matched with appropriate, high quality secondary prevention and treatment resources, we recommend supporting the expansion of the “community school” model. A community school is a public school that acts as the hub of its community by engaging community resources to offer a range of on-site programs and services focused on health, social services, academics, and youth development. Through the efforts of a community coordinator who acts as a single point of contact, individual student needs are assessed, and connections are made between students and targeted community resources. This model is based on public health and youth development principles and has been empirically demonstrated to reduce the number of high school dropouts at a reasonable per-student cost.¹ The community school model can play a central role in building the infrastructure for this model of youth services to take hold in and around California’s schools.

Reform of Alternative School Accountability System and improvement of practice in California’s continuation high school system targeting young people ages 16-18 off-track to graduate from high school. California is unique among states in providing a legislatively mandated system of alternative education for students 16 years and older who have fallen behind academically and face multiple challenges. State law requires that any school district with a high school that enrolls over one hundred students must establish a continuation high school. These schools are crucial to ensure that those neediest students who despite early intervention, are still behind by age 16 get the specialized and service intensive help they need to graduate. They are also a key to reintegrating those young people who have already left high school and are now interested in reconnecting. In order to improve the quality of instruction and health and social services, the weak accountability system under which these schools functioned must be reformed. In addition, funding formulas and district oversight must shift so these schools can truly provide the connections to services and education required to ensure the success of these students. Finally, there are islands of excellence in this system; a small number of alternative schools are making real progress. We must elevate these best practices from these model schools and from other state’s efforts and push to replicate their success throughout the state.

Leverage California’s \$550 million After School Education and Safety (ASES) Program to serve high-need boys of color and recover disconnected older youth. The After School Education and Safety (ASES) Program in California is the result of a 2002 voter-approved initiative (Proposition 49) that increased state funding for afterschool programs from \$121 million to the current funding level of \$550 million. ASES is one of the first, and currently the largest, state-sponsored program in the nation to provide funding for local after school education and enrichment programs. At this level, California invests over three times more in afterschool programs than the rest of the country combined.⁸⁵ These programs are created through partnerships between school districts, community based-organizations, and government agencies to provide literacy, academic enrichment and safe constructive alternatives for children and youth in kindergarten through ninth grade (K-9). California should expand the coverage of the ASES program to include high-school youth and explore leveraging ASES funding in concert with funding from other systems (e.g. education, child welfare, workforce, health) for recovering disconnected older youth who drop out of high school. The state should develop and implement quality standards to ensure boys of color benefit from high-quality afterschool programs like LA’s BEST in Los

⁸⁵ Fight Crime Invest in Kids California, (2010) *California’s After-School Commitment: Keeping Kids on Track and Out of Trouble*, http://www.fightcrime.org/sites/default/files/reports/CA_AS_Commitment_1.pdf

Claiming the Promise of Health & Success for Boys and Men of Color

Angeles which has proven particularly effective at reducing the likelihood of committing a crime or dropping out of school among low-income children of color.⁸⁶

Reduce the school dropout rate among boys and young men of color. Perhaps the most high-leverage strategy for improving developmental outcomes for boys and young men of color is to reduce the crisis-level rates at which they drop out of school. The state of California should adopt a number of early strategies to reduce the ballooning dropout population in California, such as : Including dropouts in the state accountability system to prevent schools who are focused on improving test scores from pushing low-performing youth, particularly black and Latino males, into alternative schools where the overwhelming majority ultimately drops out; creating a data system which collects and reports more useful data on California’s dropout problem; focusing early reform efforts on districts and schools with a disproportionate share of dropouts.

Build supported pathways to postsecondary success for youth of color. California should help young men of color to make successful transitions to the labor market by assembling resources from multiple systems including the workforce and adult education systems to support pathways for postsecondary success. This should include a “multiple pathways” approach to education with multiple entry and exit points along with a comprehensive “career pathways” to labor market transitions. Career pathways are programs that tie education, training and support programs together to expand both their education and employment opportunities simultaneously. Washington State, for example, offers more than 130 Integrated Basic Education and Skills Training (I-BEST) programs in a variety of professional fields that allow adult education and ESL students to more quickly advance along career pathways. Using the Governor’s discretionary 15 percent of Workforce Investment Act (WIA) funds, should continue to support and expand projects like the California Teacher Pathway Program funded out of the California Gang Reduction, Intervention and Prevention (CalGRIP) Initiative created in 2007.

Allow flexible state funding across systems to support the recovery of disconnected youth. California should allow flexibility in funding streams across education, child welfare, health, justice, housing, economic development and workforce systems so that local agencies can create a seamless pathway for re-engaging disconnected youth of color and supporting their successful transition to employment or higher education.

⁸⁶ Goldschmidt, P., D. Huang, and M. Chinen (2007) *The Long-Term Effects of Afterschool Programming on Educational Adjustment and Juvenile Crime: A Study of the LA’s BEST After-school Program*. Los Angeles: University of California at Los Angeles and CRESST (National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing).