



# COMMUNITIES OF CARE YEAR 6 REPORT

## DEAR COMMUNITY PARTNERS AND STAKEHOLDERS,

Our founder, Ms. Ima Hogg, had a strong commitment to the well-being of children in the Houston area, so much so that she dedicated a specific endowment to champion this cause. As an advocate for preventative, community-based supports for all children, youth, and families, Ms. Ima led the way through her service on the Houston Independent School District board, supporting the creation of the Houston Child Guidance Center, as well as several education, arts, and child protection programs.

In summer 2019, the Foundation launched the Communities of Care (CoC) initiative to support 10 collaboratives working to strengthen the mental health and well-being of communities in Houston and the surrounding areas. Six months later, when the pandemic hit and the world shut down, everyone and everything was impacted, including our grantee partners. The collaboratives, comprised of community leaders and residents, required flexibility to shift their priorities to meet the immediate needs of youth and families, including their own.

A key contributor to this initiative's success was the leadership of Prevention Institute (PI), the initiative's coordinator, who worked alongside all 10 communities to offer consistent coordination, technical assistance, and learning opportunities. In addition, PI helped create safe spaces where communities could learn with and from each other—sharing promising practices, testing creative ideas, and adapting strategies as new insights emerged.

The strength and commitment shown by the collaborative partners during this grant initiative are beyond impressive. We are grateful to have worked closely with PI and each of the collaboratives. The many innovative outcomes that emerged over the six-year period are highlighted in this report.

Thank you to PI, the collaboratives, and most importantly, the youth and families whose voices, experiences, and commitment made this initiative possible. We appreciate the trust and collaboration that communities offered throughout this work, and we remain inspired by the collective effort to improve mental health and well-being for children and families in the greater Houston area.

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**Sincerely,**

**Octavio N. Martinez, Jr., M.D., M.P.H., M.B.A., D.L.F.A.P.A.**

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**COMMUNITIES OF CARE'S GOAL**  
is to strengthen efforts to transform the environments where youth and families live, learn, work, play, and pray to support resilience, mental health, and wellbeing.



## INTRODUCTION

Launched in 2019, Communities of Care was a six-year initiative funded by the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health and coordinated by Prevention Institute. The CoC initiative addresses upstream factors that impact the mental health and wellbeing of historically excluded communities, with a focus on youth and their families across the Greater Houston Metropolitan Service Area. CoC supported 10 culturally diverse community-based collaboratives to transform how communities understand and advance mental well being in every day life. The initiative convened youth, multi-sector partners, and community members to plan and implement activities that address a wide range of community factors related to resilience, mental health, equity, and wellbeing. Examples include mobilizing resident and youth leaders to advocate for policies and practices that improve the built environment, addressing their housing and transportation needs, strengthening schools and educational opportunities for K-12 students, fostering strong social connections in neighborhoods, and advocating for policies that increase access to economic opportunity for families.

## INITIATIVE STRUCTURE AND FRAMEWORKS

### HOGG FOUNDATION FOR MENTAL HEALTH (FUNDER)

The Hogg Foundation for Mental Health was established in 1940 at The University of Texas at Austin by the children of former Texas Governor James Hogg. For over a quarter of a century, the Hogg Foundation was guided by the passion and insight of the Governor's daughter, Miss Ima Hogg who actively promoted the foundation and encouraged its staff to pursue a bold, new vision of a Texas that supports and promotes mental health, resilience, and well-being. Today the Hogg Foundation is based at The University of Texas at Austin School of Social Work and is funded through several endowments created by gifts from the Hogg family and other benefactors. The Hogg Foundation is committed to supporting community-level change while deepening its focus on learning, innovation, and partnership to advance mental well-being throughout the state. Hogg's strategy focuses on broadening access to care, and promoting transformative and upstream solutions, reflective of their dedication to adapting, learning, and collaborating to create lasting improvements in mental health across Texas communities.

Prevention Institute (PI) is a national nonprofit with offices established in Oakland in 1997, expanding to Los Angeles, Houston, and Washington, D.C. PI's mission is to build prevention and health equity into key policies and actions at the federal, state, local, and organizational level to ensure that the places where all people live, work, play and learn foster health, safety and wellbeing. In early 2019, the Hogg Foundation partnered with PI to serve as the CoC Initiative Coordinator. In early conversations, PI supported Hogg in the co-design and development of all phases of the CoC Initiative, including assessment, planning, and implementation phases. PI also designed a community of practice or learning community approach that brought together all 10 community-based collaboratives for monthly learning community meetings, regular webinars and peer learning discussions, and other capacity-building activities throughout all 6 years of CoC.

PI also worked closely with Hogg staff and a team of evaluators to support learning and build the evaluation capacity of grantees to capture their individual outcomes and impact, as well as Initiative outcomes.

In Year 1-5, a team comprised of five evaluators with experience in equitable data collection and community participatory research methods led the learning community in the development of a CoC Theory of Change, supported Hogg and PI in development of the Initiative's Five Core Principles, and designed the overall Initiative Evaluation plan, and each collaborative's logic model. Throughout Years 1-5, the evaluation team supported the Initiative and individual collaboratives to track and analyze data, understand outcomes, and progress towards initiative goals. In the Extension Year 6, initiative evaluation was primarily supported by Educo Research and included support for Hogg and the PI team to share lessons and findings of Communities of Care.

**Harris County**

Katy-Harris

Katy Southeast

Cinco Ranch/Harris

Eldridge/West Oaks

Mission Bend/Harris

Alief

Sharpstown

Cullton

OST/South Union

Baytown

Near Northside

The Wood

Magnolia Park

Springwood

Five Corners

Montgomery

Maricopa

## Name (Lead Agency)

1. **Reaching Richmond** (*AccessHealth*)
2. **Asian Americans Attaining Awareness** (*American Health Coalition*)
3. **Babies in Baytown** (*First3Years*)
4. **Dream 77021** (*Neighborhood Recovery CC*)
5. **East End Community Collaborative** (*CHRISTUS Foundation for HealthCare*)
6. **The Future is Us** (*Family Service Center of Galveston County*)
7. **Healthy Outdoor Communities** (*Houston Parks Board*)
8. **Project Rise and Shine: Live Life to the Fullest** (*Light and Salt Association*)
9. **Hiram Clarke Community Resilience Project** (*Mental Health America of Greater Houston*)
10. **Connect Community** (*My Connect Community*)



# OVER SIX YEARS, THE COMMUNITIES OF CARE INITIATIVE SAW TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGES ACROSS 10 COMMUNITY-BASED COLLABORATIVES





## COLLABORATIVES

Ten community-based collaboratives were selected to participate in the initiative. Collaboratives were coordinated by one or more community leaders, helping to establish norms, structure, and partnerships for the collaborative. Each collaborative was also connected through a learning community model, that provided an opportunity for collaborative coordinators and partners to meet regularly for peer discussion and shared learning, webinars and facilitated capacity building activities, office hours sessions, and opportunities to co-design joint activities, community events and programs across communities.

The work and impact of each Collaborative is captured through individual [CoC profiles](#) in the Appendix of this report.

- **Asian Americans Attaining Awareness (AAAA)**  
The mission of Asian Americans Attaining Awareness is to contribute to transforming Asian communities through a collaborative and holistic approach, and raise mental health awareness through community outreach, educational opportunities, and resources.
- **Babies in Baytown (BiB)**  
The mission of Babies in Baytown is to develop and grow a connected community of care for all families with children ages 0-3 that meets their individual needs.
- **Connect Community**  
The vision of Connect Community is that every child and adult will lead a healthy, prosperous life in a safe and vibrant neighborhood in which residents choose to live, learn, work, worship, and play.
- **DREAM 77021**  
The mission of Dream 77021 is to support OST/South Union transformation to become a community where residents control their own lives and wellbeing, elevate resident and youth voices as drivers of change, and ensure a lens of equity and justice are used to understand community factors that impact mental health and wellbeing.
- **East End Communities (EE)**  
East End Communities Collaborative imagines a community that honors culture and family and where people come together to build a community that is safe, secure, and happy for all its members.

- **Healthy Outdoor Communities (HOC)**

The mission of Healthy Outdoor Communities is to support good health and wellbeing in children, youth, and families of historically undervalued communities by utilizing free, safe, and easily accessible neighborhood parks and green spaces.

- **Hiram Clarke Community Resiliency Project**

The mission of Hiram Clarke Community Resiliency Project is to eliminate inequities by providing opportunities that unite the Hiram Clarke community to positively impact the mental health and well-being of youth and families of color.

- **The Future is US (TFIU)**

The mission of The Future is Us is to fight for Galveston youth through community voice so future generations can reach their full potential.

- **Project Rise and Shine (PRS)**

The mission of Project Rise and Shine is to inclusively and collaboratively empower the Asian American community to support resiliency, mental health, equity, and well-being in everyday life for all members of the community with a specific focus on children, youth, and their families.

- **Reaching Richmond (RR)**

The mission of Reaching Richmond is to collectively build a thriving community by empowering resident voices, supporting a community network, and transforming community assets to emphasize positive mental health, better well-being and an improved quality of life for families and youth in North Richmond.



## INITIATIVE FRAMEWORK AND PRINCIPLES

### THRIVE (Tool for Health and Resilience in Vulnerable Environments)

is a framework and tool developed by Prevention Institute, with support from the Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health, that supports understanding of how structural drivers play out at the community level to impact health, safety, and wellbeing. THRIVE is organized in three clusters: People (social networks and trust, participation and willingness to act for the common good, and norms and culture), Place (what's sold and how it's promoted, look, feel, and safety, housing, parks and open space, air, water, and soil, getting around, and arts and cultural expression), and Equitable Opportunity (education, living wages and local wealth/assets). THRIVE was used throughout the CoC initiative to engage community members and partners in assessing the status of community determinants, prioritizing them, and taking action to change them to improve mental health and wellbeing, and advance health equity for children, youth, and families across Houston.

### Five Core Principles

At the start of the Communities of Care Initiative, the Evaluation Team facilitated discussions with the Collaboratives, the Hogg Foundation, and the PI team to co-develop five core principles that would guide how the Collaboratives approached their work and impact on their communities. The Five Core Principles are described below:

| CoC Principles                         | Description                                                                                                                                    |
|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1 Understand the Community Environment | Gathering data to understand how the places we live, work, learn, and play impact community well-being.                                        |
| 2 Imagine One Community                | Encouraging an inclusive and Collaborative way of working and making decisions together that is fair and open to all voices.                   |
| 3 Talk and Act for Health Justice      | Talking about and addressing how race and racism result in unfair differences in community well-being.                                         |
| 4 Provide Opportunities for Learning   | Improving knowledge and skills to implement actions in the places where we live, work, learn, and play that will improve community well-being. |
| 5 Improve Community Well-Being         | Using data and lived experiences to inform actions that will improve community well-being.                                                     |





# INITIATIVE TIMELINE

The Communities of Care Initiative was carried out through three phases: assessment, planning, and implementation.

- **Assessment (Years 1-2)**

Each collaborative conducted a community assessment designed to better understand the specific challenges, barriers, and opportunities towards improving youth mental health in their communities. Assessment activities were anchored in the THRIVE framework, where collaboratives worked with residents to identify the community determinants of health they saw as most important and impactful towards youth and family wellbeing.

- **Planning (Years 3-4)**

Collaboratives engaged with strategic partners, stakeholders, and residents to co-develop pilot projects and early initiatives based on findings from their assessment. Each collaborative's strategic plan was tailored to respond to the unique context and history of their community.

- **Implementation (Years 5-6)**

Through iterative conversations with community members, leaders, and strategic partners, each collaborative developed an implementation plan, including a mission, vision, strategic partners and their roles, short and long-term goals and objectives, and key activities. Each plan mapped out short-term and long-term activities, advocacy plans, and sustainability planning to support the continued implementation of initiatives to transform their communities.

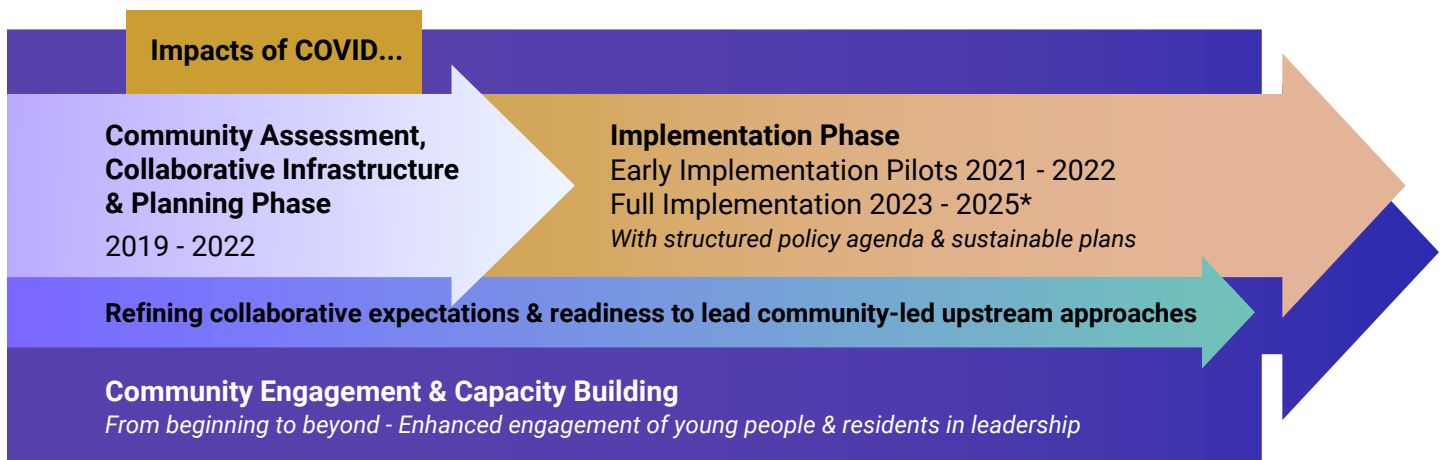
- **Sustainability**

Planning for the long-term sustainability of collaborative activities, structure, and strategic partnerships was embedded throughout the Initiative. This included ongoing capacity building for shared decision-making among collaborative members, leadership development opportunities for youth and residents, and marketing and communications strategies to ensure collaboratives' impact was shared broadly with community members and other potential funders.

- **Year 6 Extension**

With the COVID-19 pandemic and other external threats emerging throughout the initiative, collaboratives were invited to continue their work with Communities of Care through a one-year extension. This year was used for responsive coaching with a focus on sustainability of programs, activities, and trusted partnerships within communities. Technical assistance was also focused on building capacity on advocacy and policy agendas that their residents and youth can continue to build after the initiative ends. Year 6 was also a time to elevate the visibility, evaluate impact, and tell the story of CoC.

## COMMUNITIES OF CARE TIMELINE OVERVIEW





## INITIATIVE ACTIVITIES AND LEARNING

### OFFICE HOURS, WEBINARS, AND TRAININGS

Throughout the initiative, the learning community met monthly for facilitated peer discussions, webinars and workshops. These meetings were designed to introduce tools and frameworks designed to support assessment activities and strategy development, address emerging challenges in collaborative development or community outreach, and provide space for collaborative leaders to learn from each other and subject matter experts on pressing topics, including environmental health, youth culture and engagement, budget advocacy, and sustainability.

### CONVENINGS

Relationship building and sharing experiences across the collaboratives were vital to continued learning and capacity building in the learning community. In-person convenings were held semi-annually to promote authentic relationship building and facilitate connections across collaboratives who worked with similar communities or challenges.

### PRESENTATIONS, SHOWCASES, AND CONFERENCES

At the end of each year, collaboratives were invited to share their accomplishments, learnings, and advice for each other during a showcase to the Hogg Foundation. The collaboratives often invited youth, residents, and partners to present alongside them, providing them a platform to share their insights on how impact was felt in their communities. In addition to these showcases, collaboratives were also invited to share their accomplishments and strategies in conferences, community training sessions, advocacy events, and additional opportunities.

As part of the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health's work in the Greater Houston area, the collaboratives were invited to attend and present at the bi-annual Young Minds Matter conference between 2021-2025. As attendees and presenters, collaboratives engaged in opportunities to network with other youth-serving organizations, present their successes and strategies to funders and stakeholders, and gain knowledge of emerging best practices for youth and community engagement. The conference was also an opportunity to build momentum for primary prevention investments that support the mental health and wellbeing of youth and their families.



# ACHIEVEMENTS AND LEARNINGS

## POLICY AND ADVOCACY

In early 2024, Prevention Institute began to convene the CoC Policy Peer Exchange. The space was designed for interested members of the CoC learning community to gather to learn about and strategize on policy change (alongside PI & Hogg staff and one another), and develop community leaders' confidence, abilities, and vision around shared advocacy goals. While collaboratives engaged in advocacy and community organizing work in [their local communities](#), the CoC learning community had not yet come together to work towards policy change collectively. The vision that was built in these early meetings was for a space that was "not only for keeping each other up to date" but "to create a CoC legislative agenda/priorities and get more people mobilized", "plan a day where we can bring our community members to the Capitol" and to "learn about the upcoming state legislative session next year and how impacted individuals, families, and communities can take action together."

Together, CoC partners, supported by PI staff, decided to focus collective efforts on education equity – **Improving the Education System for Better Mental Health Outcomes for students**, focused in the Houston-area. CoC's Policy Peer Exchange focused on creating safe and supportive schools through:

- Access to appropriate mental health care in schools;
- Reducing exclusionary discipline and technology surveillance in schools; and
- Resisting curriculum censorship and book bans

CoC collaboratives Asian Americans Attaining Awareness, East End Communities, Reaching Richmond Community Collaborative, and The Future is US - Galveston and PI/Hogg policy staff testified in Austin at the Texas Capitol, tracked bills across our three main focus areas, activated community members to submit written testimony and make calls to elected officials, and co-organized, planned, and sponsored [a 2025 Texas State Capitol Advocacy Day](#) with student movement, [SEAT](#) (Students Engaged in

Advancing Texas). About 80 of the 300 attendees were students (and some collaborative leaders and adult partners) from Communities of Care and partners UTHealth Action Lab. Since Advocacy Day, CoC community leaders from AAAA, EE, RR, and TFIU have presented their work at the TX Annual Prevention Providers Meeting in Austin through a session entitled Building Community Power Through Policy Collaboration and hosted workshops to educate community members in Galveston and the East End neighborhoods (and virtually open to all) on what passed/didn't pass during the 89th Texas legislative session. From April 2024 - August 2025, the CoC Policy Peer Exchange received capacity building training on a variety of policy/advocacy and community organizing topics from PI staff, Hogg policy staff, and a number of partners.

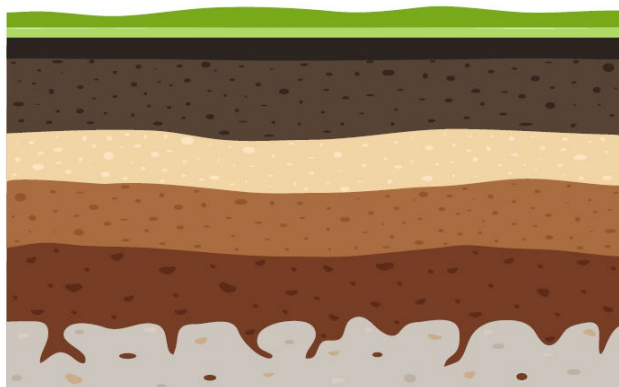
For a detailed account of the training and actions for the [CoC policy peer exchange](#), visit this link: [CoC Policy Peer Exchange Detailed Timeline/Description of Activities](#)



## SUSTAINABILITY AND COLLABORATIVE INFRASTRUCTURE

In 2023, Collaboratives began exploring what long-term sustainability could look like for their work. While each Collaborative was anchored to a grantee organization, those interested in continuing their efforts beyond the initiative needed to identify opportunities and strategies to sustain their work and impact. To support this process, Prevention Institute partnered with Wendie Veloz Enterprises to help collaboratives envision and plan for their long-term sustainability. Wendie Veloz introduced her 8-Step Sustainability Model, which provided a structured framework to guide Collaborative discussions and decision-making around sustainability.

### 8 layers of sustainability



- 1. Leading with passion**
- 2. Investment/divestment strategy**
- 3. Partnerships & capacity**
- 4. Communications & marketing**
- 5. Long-term change strategy**
- 6. Shared risk & protective factors**
- 7. Equity**
- 8. Coordinated & complementary funding streams**

In December 2023, Babies in Baytown (BiB) recognized the importance of establishing a long-term sustainability plan and partnered with Wendie Veloz to host an in-person workshop focused on envisioning their future beyond the grant. The session brought together parents, Collaborative partners, and the grantee organization for an interactive planning experience that resulted in key decisions shaping BiB's path forward.

Prevention Institute continued collaborating with Wendie into the following year, sharing sustainability tools and

resources that emphasized the importance of strong partnerships and diversified resources. Building on the success seen with BiB, Wendie was invited to lead an in-person sustainability workshop for all Collaboratives during the May 2024 Convening. This session helped deepen relationships and connected Collaboratives more meaningfully to the sustainability concepts they had been introduced to over the previous year.

Following the convening, several Collaboratives expressed interest in receiving individualized coaching. It became clear that Collaboratives were at different stages in their sustainability journeys, prompting a shift toward more tailored one-on-one support. Over the past year, Collaboratives have continued to engage in personalized coaching focused on strengthening their sustainability plans and refining their long-term impact strategies. Through these conversations, Collaboratives explored whether they were prepared to continue their work beyond the grant period or whether they might evolve or transition into new structures.

Most recently, Prevention Institute partnered closely with Wendie Veloz to develop a Sustainability Library—a collection of webinars, blog posts, videos, tools, and templates designed to support both current and future Collaboratives. This resource hub provides practical guidance, insights, and strategies to bolster sustainability planning for years to come.

#### Sustainability Resources:

Link to the sustainability docs: [Click here to visit the Communities of Care Sustainability Toolkit](#)





## YOUTH AND RESIDENT LEADERSHIP

Co-designing activities that promoted youth and resident leadership was essential for sustaining key messages and movements that came out of the Initiative. Since the start of the Initiative, each collaborative was able to move the needle and change organizational practices to promote shared leadership, equitable decision-making structures, governance, and transparent communication with residents. A selection of resident and youth leadership milestones are shared below, but only represent a small portion of the strides each collaborative made to transform the way they engage and elevate the power of community members.

### Parent Leadership

Through their Family Leadership Group, **Babies in Baytown** engaged parents of babies 0-3 in workshops based on the COFI (Community Organizing and Family Issues) model, helping parents build leadership skills to present and lead collaborative activities that advocated for equitable childcare policies. In 2025, parent leaders and their families joined the collaborative at the Texas State Capitol to advocate for access to quality education and learn more about the legislative process.



### Youth-led Initiatives

Throughout their time in the Initiative, coordinators at **Connect Community** worked to develop youth leaders across their time in school. By the end of the Initiative, youth leaders held a seat at the leadership table, leading efforts to collaboratively develop the name, design, and messages of a newly built youth center in the Gulfton community, The Garden. The center stands as a testament to the value of developing youth leaders and giving space for them to take the lead on community transformation efforts.



### Advocacy Wins

With the support of collaborative leaders, the **Reaching Richmond Community Collaborative** engaged youth to address their concerns about safety in their community. Through intentional workshops and training sessions, the youth-led advocacy group, Junior Street Captains, accomplished their goal of improving streetlight availability in their neighborhood through presentations to city council members.



To engage youth across the Greater Houston area beyond individual collaborative activities, Prevention Institute coordinated semi-regular events and workshops to understand common and shared goals for advocacy and policy change across the Initiative. In 2024, Prevention Institute and collaborative coordinators convened a half-day Youth Summit, dedicated to providing interactive activities and meaningful conversations between youth leaders the collaboratives worked with. This Summit concluded with an interactive group discussion around the hopes and dreams youth had for their communities and schools, providing a launching point for the themes and workshops that would be included in the 2025 Young Minds Matter: Meeting the Moment Together conference.

## IMPACT ON COMMUNITIES

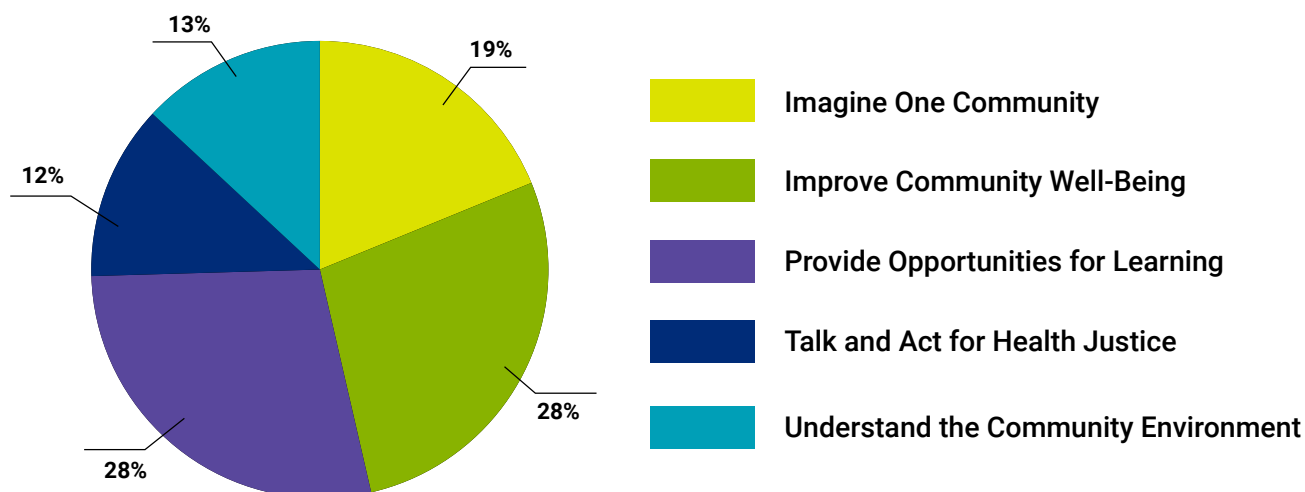
Evaluation activities were regularly conducted throughout Communities of Care to understand how collaborative activities impacted their communities and the well-being of youth and their families.

An overall assessment of the impact the Communities of Care Initiative was conducted by Educo Research in 2025 based on the Five Core Principles developed by the learning community. Quantitative evaluation measures were tracked through the University of Kansas Community Checkbox Evaluation System. Qualitative evaluation approaches included an analysis of interviews with youth and residents who participated in each collaborative throughout the initiative. The evaluation team considered the following questions to shape their evaluation approach:

1. How do the Collaboratives structure including its operations, activities, leadership, and networks impact the outcomes of the initiative?
2. How have the Collaboratives knowledge and capacity increased over the life of the initiative?
3. How have the Collaboratives been able to influence community factors and policies that influence the mental well-being of children, youth, and families of color?

### Impact on The Five Core Principles

Collaboratives used the Community Checkbox Evaluation System to track activities over time based on which of the Five Principles their activities addressed between 2019 and 2024. Principle 5: Improve Community Wellbeing and Principle 4: Provide Opportunities for Learning were addressed the most by Collaboratives. These activities often included training sessions with communities, events with educational components, or activities that spread awareness around mental health and wellbeing for youth.







Qualitative insights were gathered through in-depth interviews with residents and youth who participated in the collaboratives through planning, events, and shared leadership. These responses are organized under the Five Principles of Communities of Care to understand the impact the collaboratives made across these focus areas throughout the initiative.

**Principle 1: Understand the Community Environment - Gathering data to understand how the places we live, work, learn, pray, and play impact community well-being.**

In interviews, collaborative members described how a main goal for their Collaborative efforts was to assess and share information, knowledge, and resources with other community members. Building awareness of assets and opportunities in their community enabled many of the Collaboratives to mobilize with residents on shared priorities and goals. Some of these activities included educating others about mental health and mental health awareness, the connection between health and housing development, and creating a safe, third space for young people.

**Principle 2: Imagine One Community - Encouraging an inclusive and collaborative way of working and making decisions together that is fair and open to all voices.**

Participants were engaged in the Collaboratives by planning events and programs, designing spaces for youth, and attending and/or facilitating workshops and training. They were also asked how their voices were being included in decision-making in the Collaboratives, to support the key feature of shared-decision making and inclusive structures. Most, 11 out of 13 participants shared that they did feel included when decisions were being made in the collaborative. They shared program and event ideas, outreach strategies, event logistics, and planning processes in meetings, gatherings and/or smaller/larger groups.

**Principle 3: Talk and Act for Health Justice - Talking about and addressing the impact of unfair differences in community well-being.**

The interview questions related to this principle attempted to identify whether participants were talking about justice and addressing how structural systems result in unfair differences

in a community's mental health and well-being. While there was little explicit mention of the constructs of structural systems, communities demonstrated a deeper understanding of the root causes of mental health concerns and a need for more education in communities about how policy systems and structural racism lead to adverse outcomes.

**Principle 4: Provide Opportunities for Learning - Improving knowledge and skills to implement actions in the places where we live, work, learn, and play that will improve community well-being** Participants were asked about their understanding of the term “mental health and wellbeing” to identify whether Collaborative members built capacity and gained knowledge when participating in the initiative. Generally, participants discussed the term as an interconnection of mental, physical and psychological human behaviors and state of mind that individuals experience in their lives.

**Principle 5: Improve Community Well-Being - Using data and lived experiences to inform actions that will improve community wellbeing.** Participants shared their perceptions of the current changes they saw from the collaboratives' efforts these past years and what they hoped would continue to improve. Most stated they saw increased involvement and interest for community members and youth to participate in training and capacity building opportunities and events. Other improvements residents saw over time included improved language access related to mental health resources, more connection of the history of race and mental health, and increased discussion about mental health stigma across communities.

## **ADDITIONAL REFLECTIONS FROM COLLABORATIVE MEMBERS, YOUTH, AND RESIDENTS ON IMPACT**

**Deepened Understanding of Mental Well-being** Participants were also asked how their involvement in the collaborative developed their understanding or awareness of mental health and wellbeing. Ten out of 13 gained awareness through the collaborative, one had prior knowledge and understanding due to their professional background, and two

did not respond to the question. Participants gained awareness, increased their involvement in the community and learned about the other social determinants of health, such as housing, through their involvement in the Collaborative.

### **Resilience**

Participants were asked whether they felt their communities were resilient. All participants stated that their collaboratives showed resilience through natural disasters and world health crises, like the COVID pandemic of 2021. The COVID-19 pandemic was a significant disruption to the CoC Initiative's launch and further planning. As a result, the initiative was extended for a sixth year. Other natural disasters, like loss of power, flooding and community members' passings were other challenges faced by Collaborative members.

### **Impact on Mental Well-being**

Finally, participants were asked what effect their involvement had on their own mental well-being, and six out of 13 described their involvement as incorporating them into a community and 'family-like' environment; they felt empowered, supported and encouraged.



**“Being a part of this collaborative has really made us interns and volunteers think a lot more about mental health and related to like our own racial identities. And from what I’ve heard, the collaborative has done a pretty decent job of collecting data and then just promoting awareness here and there. It seems like a really good step, but it’s definitely like a very continuous effort.”** Participant 13, Youth



**“I would say that it kind of just brought me a deeper appreciation for early childhood development in the future. I do want to become a teacher specifically to autistic kids to life skills at elementary. And it’s kind of giving me a deeper perspective of what it is and how to help children.”** Participant 2, Youth





## RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations below are provided for the field in continuing the work of Communities of Care and similar efforts. These recommendations have been developed based on the experiences and insights of the learning community, including the CoC collaboratives, the Hogg Foundation, PI, and the Evaluation Team. This includes insights around funding similar models of community transformation, building authentic relationship with communities, developing collaborative structures that support shared leadership, and mobilizing youth on shared advocacy efforts.

### FOR FORMING A LEARNING COMMUNITY:

- Provide Capacity Building and Training Opportunities
  - Build resident/youth capacity for research, data collection, and sustainable leadership models
  - Incorporate training that strengthens cultural competence and promotes effective multi-generational collaboration, ensuring inclusivity and relevance across diverse communities.
- Start with a Clear Structure, Roles, and Governance
  - Formalize structures (e.g., governance, onboarding, MOUs) early on.
  - Clearly define partner roles, responsibilities, and decision-making processes to avoid confusion and ensure accountability
- Broaden the collaborative early to include a diverse range of stakeholders. Screen partners for commitment and capacity and clarify expectations through shared planning and structured tools (e.g., THRIVE, Collaborative Multiplier).
- Foster a Shared Vision and Group Culture
  - Co-create a clear mission, goals, and group culture.
  - Engage all partners in developing a shared understanding of community needs and the collaborative's purpose
- Focus on Sustainability and Long-Term Impact
  - Develop a sustainability plan early, including diverse funding sources and long-term strategies.
  - Focus on creating structures that can outlast short-term funding and provide training in areas such as grant writing.
  - Facilitate connections with peer organizations, policy exchanges, and collaborative learning networks to foster solidarity, share best practices, and prevent leadership burnout.





## FOR FUNDING AND COORDINATING COLLABORATIVE EFFORTS:

- Practice Trust-Based Philanthropy
  - Design initiatives with flexibility to tailor strategies to needs and context of each community.
  - During times of crisis (like COVID-19), allow collaboratives flexibility to support basic needs of youth and families.
- Collaborative Development and Capacity Building
  - Assess level of readiness and adjust timeline and capacity building needs for individual collaboratives.
  - Consider long-term funding structures that include the time needed to develop collaboratives and implement strategies in the community.
- Embed Opportunities for Co-Learning
  - Incorporate consistent opportunities for collaboratives to share learnings and information back with funders to facilitate shared learning.
  - Deepen understanding of impact through consistent site visits and authentic relationship building.
  - Use in-person events and meetings as spaces for building relationships and strategies across collaboratives.

## FOR MOBILIZING YOUTH

- Build relationships over time consistently
- Listen to and partner with young people – center their experiences
- Keep your expectations consistent
- Partner with other adults/orgs willing to take risks
- Be creative in your engagement
- Be real & mind your adulthood
- Provide access so they can engage (honorariums for their time and efforts, transportation, internet and phone access)
- Meet young people where they are at (literally!)
- Don't always make it about the issue – create spaces for joy and fun!





## CONCLUSION

Over six years, the Communities of Care Initiative saw transformative changes across 10 community-based collaboratives, harnessing resident power and leadership to engage in local and state-level advocacy and policy changes. Communities across Greater Houston have engaged in community transformation efforts and leadership practices that address the root causes of poor mental health among youth and their families. The impact of the learning community has reached young people, families, schools, communities, and systems, forever changing the way they talk about and work to protect mental health and wellbeing. The learnings and momentum from Communities of Care will serve as a foundation for the continued efforts of the collaboratives across Houston and beyond.

We would like to acknowledge the leadership of our trusted partners at The Hogg Foundation for Mental Health, especially the contributions of Vicky Coffee and the late Stephanie June Bryan, whose vision for change and authentic community engagement paved the way for the transformative work led by collaborative leaders, residents, and youth. We would also like to thank the many subject matter experts and leaders in the field who provided key expertise, training, and capacity building to the collaboratives, Prevention Institute, and the Hogg Foundation for Mental Health. We are especially grateful to the 10 community-based collaboratives, whose members dedicated their time and energy to working and learning together, inspiring us every day by their achievements, learnings, and impact on communities.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### STRATEGY PARTNERS:

- Dr. Pamela Hernandez
- Evaluation Team 2019-2024
  - Bakeyah Nelson
  - Pamela Hernandez
  - Earthea Nance
  - Quianta Moore
  - Shauntice Allen
  - Joy Semien
- Wendie Veloz
- UT Action Lab
- Students Engaged in Advancing Texas
- University of Kansas: Community Toolbox

### COMMUNITIES OF CARE COLLABORATIVES

- Asian Americans Attaining Awareness
- Babies in Baytown
- Connect Community
- DREAM 77021
- East End Communities
- Healthy Outdoor Communities
- Hiram Clarke Community Resiliency Project
- The Future is US – Galveston
- Project Rise and Shine
- Reaching Richmond

### CAPACITY BUILDING AND LEARNING PARTNERS

- Odin Zackman – Dig In
- Manuel Soares – Race Equity Collective
- Alison Mohr Boleware – The Hogg Foundation for Mental Health
- Jaison Oliver – Data to Dream
- Dr. Noni Gaylord-Harden – Texas A&M Youth Rising Lab
- Dr. Deon Brown - formerly with the Texas A & M Youth Rising Lab
- Reverend Vanessa Monroe – Journey HTX
- Christina Delgado – Community Justice
- Chelsea Barabas – Edgelands Institute
- Dr. Jeff Acido
- Kanwarpal Dhaliwal – RYSE Center
- Dr. Assata Richards - Youth Justice Community Reinvestment Fund
- LySaundra Campbell - The Social Soundtrack
- Imani Evans - The Hogg Foundation for Mental Health
- Jaime Gonzalez - Nature Conservancy of Texas
- MyKayla Searles-Houston – US Dream Academy

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## APPENDIX

### STRATEGY PARTNERS:

- [CoC Profiles \(complete set\)](#)
- [Wendie V. Sustainability Tools](#)
  - [Babies in Baytown Case Study](#)
  - [Sustainability Learning Academy Lessons Learned](#)
  - [Sustainability- Key Questions](#)
  - [Sustainability Plan Template-Worksheet](#)
  - [Sustainability Tools and Resources](#)



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