TRANSCRIPT

Webinar:
Fostering Positive Youth Development: Opportunities to Reframe the Conversation About Trauma

April 1, 2016

[**Slide:** *Agenda*]

JEFF POLIK

The agenda for today: firstly, we'll examine some fundamental understandings of positive youth development and its intersection with trauma dynamics. Then we're going to look into what it means to be a positive youth development advocate and how to partner with young people so they can become agents of their own trauma healing, and look into examples of how young people are driving pathways to their own wellness. We're excited to hear from RYSE Youth Center and learn about their practices in the field. We will close with some Q&A.

Today's conversation is going to be led by Leora Wolf-Prusan. She is a School Climate & Student Support Specialist here at WestEd's Health and Human Development Program. Leora has years of experience working with youth in a variety of roles— teacher, coach, advocate, organizer, co-researcher—and considers herself happiest in the company of teams manifesting their own development determination and actualization. Our practitioner spotlight features RYSE Youth Center based out of Richmond, California. And RYSE's mission statement says it all: "to create safe spaces grounded in social justice that build youth power for young people to love, learn, educate, heal, and transform lives and communities." Two of their staff, Brian Villa and Abbas Khalid, will be presenting their youth organizing and leading work around trauma and healing. So, with that said, I am going to get us started.

[**Slide:** *1. Positive Youth Development*]

LEORA WOLF-PRUSAN

All right, good morning everyone and thank you, Jeff. We are so happy to have you here as part of the second part of the series. What I want to start off this morning with is really thinking about why we're even grounding the conversation in a series on trauma and its impacts on youth in school, and also talking about positive youth development and leadership. So we want to begin with the underlying premise that positive youth development and leadership is a trauma-informed cornerstone. So when we are talking about principles and practices that—at the foundation—is young people both creating for themselves and accessing opportunities that we set for them to navigate their own healing and their own wellness. Oftentimes when we talk about trauma-informed care or trauma-informed principles, we talk a lot about what adults can do for young people, and today we're actually talking about two different

approaches: what young people can do for themselves and also how we as adults can be allies in that.

So we do hear youth positive development and trauma-informed care and leadership spoken about in really separate conversations, but today we're going to be talking about that all at the same time.

[**Slide:** *Trauma & Resilience*]

So just to ground us in some language—the first webinar we talked about how we're even defining trauma and resilience; we want to go over that a little bit to get on the same page. So we define trauma as "experiences or situations that are emotionally painful, distressing, and overwhelm people's ability to cope, leaving them feeling powerless." And we also talked about resilience as "the processes of, or the capacity for, or the pathways and patterns of positive adaptation during or following significant threats or disturbances." So both of those—both trauma and resilience—are not things that define us, they're things that we live with, and that resilience is a process and outcome but the overarching outcome of both of these two pieces. And this conversation is thinking about self and collective determination for people through their own lives: navigating the waters of trauma, navigating the waters of feeling uncared for, or feeling like they may not have agency. And that's why we respond in a trauma-informed and resilience-oriented manner—to reassert and reclaim that feeling of powerlessness.

So in our first webinar, we talked also about how supportive and significant adult relationships can be a source of healing and reclamation of that empowerment and agency for the persons or people—and in this case young people—whom we serve, who are experiencing a taxed sense of coping. So I want to be really clear that when we talk about trauma, we aren't necessarily only talking about an adverse childhood experience because not all adverse childhood experiences lead to experiences of trauma and not all traumas lead to or are connected to points of feeling overwhelmed or powerlessness, but we want to figure out as the adults in young people's lives how we can actually create a conversation for young people to make meaning of what's happening.

[**Slide:** *Principles of Trauma Informed Care*]

So, with that, we're going to move ahead. And, again, we talked about this in the first conversation that I'm reasserting so that we can be on the same page. So we discussed that there are trauma-informed factors, so two of which are foundational for today's conversation: attachment—so, significant relationships; and safety—holding space. And you'll see that we've bolded some of the trauma-informed principles that are built by a lot of different agencies—SAMHSA, one of them—and these are modified to bolded: choice—agency, attachment, and safety. Those are all part of our conversation today, although you can argue that so are the others as well, and as we discussed, that trauma-informed principles are in direct response to what one person or a collective people feel a lack of when experiencing trauma.

So we talk about choice in order to respond to a sense of helplessness; we talk about attachment and significant relationships to respond to a sense of a disrupted attachment in a caregiver relationship; and we talk about safety and holding space, listening and hearing, in

response to feeling powerless, unseen, unheard, and disenfranchised. I want to mention, especially for the conversation about working with young people navigating their own wellness, that even the conversation and concept of safety—which we use a lot in our conversations in classrooms and in meetings—that safety can actually mean very different things depending on where you are; safety is also contextual. And there's actually the Los Angeles Violence Prevention Coalition—really does a beautiful job advocating for talking about the competing frameworks that they see. Young people might have a very different definition and then response to creating safety in the context of their own community, which is how we're defining safety when they enter quote/unquote "our space," and so it's also necessary to unpack what those tension points might be. I want to point to the last—the realms of trauma-informed care. That just as we talk about relationships living in a self-services structures and systems, concentric circle frame, that we also talk about that happening in terms of trauma-informed care practices: What are we doing in our own work with our own self? What are we doing when we think about how services are constructed, delivered, and received? How are services structured? What are the both institutional structures that both create compounded senses of trauma when the systems themselves actually exacerbate a sense of trauma for those seeking help and support? Then we also want to have this conversation at the systems level because we don't exist in isolation; we exist in a larger context that has created both historic, intergenerational, and context of trauma and a sense of powerlessness. I want to acknowledge that these same realms can be frames for resilience—we talk about resilience to the self, resilience in services, resilience in structures and system.

[**Slide:** *Six Fundamental Cornerstones to Ensure Any Youth Development-Based Program Has Authentic Impact with Youth*]

So, with that said, I am going to move us into also talking about positive youth development. And there are a lot of different frameworks to positive youth development; mainly, that positive youth development operates from a strengths-based approach: that we are operating under the assumption that not only ourselves but the young people that we work with have the answers to their own challenges and it's our job to be the constructive conversation points to support them to navigate the own context of their lives. And the other piece about positive youth development is that it's a framework that doesn't just address young people who are living with trauma, it's a universal framework. So all young people should, can, and do have the opportunity to develop in a positive, healthy, structured way, and so that's why we use this framework. The Movement Strategy Center offers that in order to do anything that is foundationally pointed towards positive youth development, that there are these six points that will get us there both in the self, services, structures, and systems way. And when we focus on sustainability, when we focus on counseling and ongoing support, when we focus on academic support, because that touches upon that trauma-informed principle of competence and mastery. We focus on internal structures to provide services and healing; when our services, structures, and systems are population-specific and culturally relevant—so we know that trauma and resilience are both contextual, deeply contextual—and the last is that services, systems, and structures are explicitly—not implicitly, but explicitly—designed to address emotional healing that responds to pains and legacies of historical and systemic oppression.

[**Slide:** *What is at the center of it all?*]

What really is at the center of what we're talking about? We're really talking about a sense of agency and empowerment for students—I'm using the word "students" but we can also say "young people"—there's a lot of conversation in the ally world around using the word "young people," "youth" instead of "students." So at the center of it all, we're talking about the systemic establishment of the agency and empowerment for all students so that they have the efficacy and opportunity to navigate the waters of their own lives in an environment that fosters healing, is relationship based, and ultimately creates pathways that manifest provisions for them and their families' transformations. So I have included two quotes that I keep close to my own practice, and I want to call attention to the second quote, which is from *Healing-Centered Youth Organizing from the Urban Peace Movement*, that really also talks about problematizing our use of the word "risk" and youth who are at risk because, as we know from a positive youth development framework, that we actually need risk in order to grow, in order for our sense of self, in order for our learning to develop. And so Nicole Lee actually offers us two different types of risk taking: destructive risk taking and nurtured risk taking. And today that's really...the second is what we want to talk about: what does it look like to create spaces of nurtured risk taking.

[**Slide:** *Serving as Meaning Making Partners*]

I'm going to move into the second piece of this conversation today, which is how, then, we as adults—who have power in fostering these environments for young people to navigate their trauma and resilience—how do we serve as meaning-making partners? And you'll see that at the bottom, I've included one of my favorite quotes around what does it look like to be an advocate or an ally. The idea that it means that "you move into discomfort so that I can move out of pain and we can meet in the middle"; it requires movement on both ends, both from the person seeking support and the supporter, in order to find a space of mutual collaboration and interdependency. And that actually means that there's truth in that; that for some of us it requires moving into discomfort.

[**Slide:** *We approach trauma & resilience through our own lenses*]

And we want to start off—and again this kind of roots into the self circle that we saw earlier—that trauma and resilience is approached through our own lenses, that trauma and resilience is socio-culturally bound. So how I might define what it looks like to feel trauma or what does it look like to be resilient comes from my own lived experience, and if I as an adult ally don't check what my own definitions are, I might be working with young people with a story already told around what they should do or what they should be feeling. And so because we code what resilience looks like and trauma looks like, it's really important to navigate and investigate our own definitions because it has implications on how young people who we serve experience wellness or not.

So I want to just offer a quick example about a young person who I used to work with when I was a teacher, was down the hall in a school that I was working in, and she was coded by the adults in our professional development as oppositional and defiant, and when we were having a

conversation afterwards about her behavior she looked us square in the eye and she said, "I'm just doing what you taught me to do; I'm being resilient." And it was this really beautiful moment of how when she was advocating for herself how we as adults coded it as one thing versus her own narrative as coding it as another.

[**Slide:** *So, what is your lens?*]

So moving forward, we wanted to offer you some conversations or some questions around how you in your own practice, in your own self-reflection, or you as leaders of agencies—and we saw that there are so many people on the line from different agencies and departments across the country—that there are some questions that can really help us unpack and check our own trauma and resilience conversation. So how do we define trauma or resilience for ourselves in our own life, and without psychoanalyzing, what is your own trauma narrative episodically—so an event that may have happened, or environmentally an ongoing experience that you might live with? What might have supported you through that experience or time and how did you access opportunities to explore resilience?

[**Slide:** *And, how will this approach impact your practice?*]

The other set of questions is to think about, when we adopt trauma-informed principles, what this could mean. It requires us to change and improve and interrupt some behaviors and practices in our own work and in the agencies and systems that we work. That's really scary and incredibly difficult. And so we offer these questions to help us navigate those shifts, that paradigm shift; that we offer, how might being trauma-informed and resilience-oriented impact your teaching and leading? How might being trauma-informed and resilience-oriented impact your students' learning and leading? And what supports do you need, what might you need, in order to nurture your own trauma capital? It's a term that I use because we talk a lot about human capital, economic capital, social capital, and actually there's great power in having experience of feeling overwhelmed and then developing resilience, and so we also want to position trauma as a source of power and not something that is debilitating or pathologizing.

[**Slide:** *Youth Wellness & Voice*]

So we're going to move into the third section of this conversation, which is on youth wellness and voice. And so we want to note, too, that this work is not linear. So just as young people are dynamically navigating the context of their lives, that we, too—as our work and our learning and reflection is also dynamic, meaning that our work is ongoing and can happen alongside students' healing and development. And that often we see that we are always serving young people versus young people also serving us in our own ongoing resilience and healing. So the other aspect of moving into discomfort is opening doors to young people to be their own service providers to themselves and each other. And that can really challenge our adult ego—I know it has in mine in the past—and it challenges our own sense of structure because we have the training, we have the credentials, some of us have the lived experience, but our students also have their own funds of knowledge and their own funds of lived experience, and so together in partnership we can create trauma-informed, youth-driven, and resiliency-based school environment.

[**Slide:** *Youth-Adult Relationship*]

So I'm going to show a couple of schemas around how we as adults working with young people can really check our own approach and partnership in working with young people as they navigate their own trauma and resilience. These are spectrums that some of you are familiar with, and I also want to point that in the handouts for this webinar you have the full model info handout, so not to get caught up only on this slide. Some of you are familiar with Hart's Ladder, the youth-adult relationship. Others are familiar with the spectrum of youth leadership, so what are roles that young people can hold that are different from traditional roles. And the last is the spectrum of student voice, which is from Students at the Hub in terms of how we also see students manifesting their own leadership. So I'm going to give us an example of how when we coach for student mental health, how we use these models—that are actually models for positive youth development and leadership—how we use them in the space of student mental health and of youth empowerment.

[**Slide:** *What could this look like contextualized for wellness & support systems?*]

So I'm going to move ahead. What we did is we took…and you'll see on the left these are the rungs of Hart's Ladder, which is the rungs of student and adult participation in blue, and in the salmon color are the rungs of youth voice—this is exactly from Hart's Ladder—and what we did is we contextualized them to what it would look like in wellness or support systems. So at the very top it might look like that young people actively identify their own wellness and support system needs, approaches, services, and invite adults to partner with them throughout the process. So any adult action is youth-centered and responsive.

[**Slide:** *Non-participation*]

And I'm going to read the top of the rung because as I move forward I want to underscore that there is also the second half, which is, what does it look like when young people are non-participants, when they're manipulated or tokenized? And in the mental health and wellness world, what does that actually look like when we don't get consent for young people in how they're accessing their services and systems for their own healing. So, again, I'm going to read the bottom rung—the "manipulation"—it could look like that adults have complete and unchallenged authority to abuse their power, enforcing or coercing young people to receive services. So a young person is referred and then has to follow that referral and doesn't have voice or choice in what that referral looks like, for example, and any ideas young people offer about their experiences of the support system and of wellness services are used for adult gain. And so adults going to meetings and saying "we do this, X, Y, Z," but without young people in the room to be their own representative.

So I'm offering this because this is an example, and what we do in some of our coaching is that we actively support folks to use any one of the spectrums that I just showed you—the voice, leadership, or Hart's Ladder—to contextualize it for your own approaches to mental health services and systems. It's a great way to assess where we are in our practices and principles and how we're living up to those trauma-informed principles and to what it means to be an advocate. I know that that was a lot, and so I'm also happy to answer questions about that as

we move forward. So I will say that we also, in our school climate work at WestEd, that we use these schemas with young people when we do wellness leadership trainings and they themselves assess their experience across the ladder. So, what does it look like in their experience of PBIS, what does it look like in their experience of receiving services and receiving opportunities to explore their lived experiences.

[**Slide:** *Examples across disciplines, departments & realms*]

So I'm going to, again, move actually into some concrete examples of what this can look like, because I know it's been a lot of theory. So we do have youth wellness leadership workshops here at WestEd, which are founded in the outcome to provide young people and their adult allies time to assess, create practices and policies for healthy positive development and trauma healing. And so that's part of one of the examples that I included on the screen, and so you'll see that we sourced from examples. We want to ask you to put some of your own in the chat box, so those of you who are doing incredible leadership and youth partnership, if you wanted to share some of your own examples of how you are helping in creating opportunities for young people to be the leaders of their own wellness, please put that in the chat box.

So it can look like really different levels of change, right. So at the top we have the Compton lawsuit that's happening right now in Compton Unified, where young people are suing a school district to have meaningful access to their learning; that's a pretty different and direct way for young people to have voice and choice in their agency of their healing.

I'm also calling out the organization Educators for Fair Consideration, which is a Bay Area-based organization supporting undocumented youth in their access to college and graduation—so access and success. And most of the programs at this point for Educators for Fair Consideration are run by young people themselves. So they're working in partnership with their own peers and allied educators.

In Oakland, the program Teens on Target, run by Youth ALIVE—so young people mentor, teach, and organize through peer-to-peer work on preventing their and healing experiences directly due to gun violence.

There's also the ongoing structures like advisory programs that have been going on for many, many, many years that position students at the center of their own experiences. Some have practices like student-led conferences—I'm sure that a lot of you are familiar with that. We're going to hear later from RYSE around its instructional practices; this is where curriculum and instruction comes into partnership like Youth & Community Participatory Action Research. This links back to the slide earlier that showed the different ways in which young people are arriving at their leadership; one is to be a researcher. And we also know that a lot of you are leading work towards young people leading restorative circles in schools, so not adults leading them for them, but young people peer mediating and leading restorative practices in schools.

And as I mentioned, the Youth Wellness Summits that we have at WestEd, where we actually have adults and young people learning together in the morning, separate: adults do work around what does it mean to be an ally, separate; young people do work around what does it

mean to be a wellness leader; and then we come back together in the afternoon and action plan.

I want to call in some of the examples that you are putting in the chat box. So you have a sixth grade peer leader program, which is phenomenal because we know that the only person that young people listen to the most is their peers, so peer leadership and mentorship is a really beautiful practice. I also see that there is a squad, a peer-led squad for suicide prevention, which is really important. And a lot of students leading their own socio-emotional lessons in schools, so students in the third and fifth grade presenting and teaching their younger peers in kinder to second classroom. There's also a program—Stephanie Cayuaga is calling out a program, Young Empowered Women—so, advise your elective for high school, middle school growth on emotional literacy and resilience. And then there is youth court, which is a practice that is nationwide in terms of young people figuring out what the response should be if there's a norm that is broken in the community. And so there's many different ways of these can happen. I want, again, as many of us have a lot of practices in place…our coaching and our advocacy, to all of us in this conversation this morning, is that we use those spectrums and we use our understanding about trauma to actually check what practices and programs we have in place to make sure that they are adequately serving our young people in the way that they need to.

[**Slide:** *4. Transition to spotlight practitioner*]

So, with all that said, I am incredibly excited to introduce Brian and Abbas, who are going to do a much deeper dive into an example from the field of what this looks like in practice, and I'm going to hand it over to them.

ABBAS KHALID

My name is Abbas Khalid. I'm the member engagement and re-entry coordinator for the RYSE Center. I'm from Oakland, California, and part of the reason why I do this work is for myself as an adolescent, I struggled through healing and just due to the trauma that I've experienced coming up as a child. And part of the thing that helped me heal was having opportunity for leadership, and also building up my own leadership and capacity to organize and change my community. So that's part of the reason why I do the work that I do, and I am going to pass it off to Brian.

BRIAN VILLA

Hi, everyone, my name is Brian Villa and I am the lead community health coordinator at the RYSE Center. I was born and raised in East LA and grew up around a lot of situations in that environment of trauma and violence. I made my way up to the Bay Area, attending UC Berkeley in 2008, studying Southeast Asian studies and education, and came to RYSE about three and a half years ago as a college access coordinator, really supporting young people in navigating and pursuing and accessing higher education. And since then my goal has shifted into more of community health, providing support services for LGBTQ youth, and now as a lead community health coordinator facilitating and organizing our health and wellness program.

[**Slide:** *RYSE Youth Center*]

ABBAS KHALID

All right. So before we go into our practices of how we work with young people, we're going to give you a brief history about how RYSE came about. So RYSE was birthed out of youth organizing—youths were organizing due to a string of homicides that were happening around Richmond High School. Young people identified that the city as well as the school did not prioritize safety and the city did not provide spaces for young people to hang out that were outside of, like, the streets of their communities. So the young people organized forums as well as created a survey for young people within their school, and they surveyed about 1,500 young people. Out of the survey, they identified two priorities: one was, young people needed a safe place to hang out and socialize with their peers; two is, young people needed programs that were relevant to their lives and their interests. So due to organizing and working with policymakers, they were able to get the RYSE Center open, and it opened October 18 in 2008.

The RYSE Center is composed of five different departments. My first department is our Youth Justice Department, our Youth Organizing Department, our Education and Career Department, Community Health and Wellness, and Media Arts and Culture. All of our departments, we make sure that we are integrative, so we all work together. So when you walk into the building it feels like all one big place that provides services for young people. So when young people come in, it's very much a family culture; so when they come in they feel that the genuine relationships from each of the staff that work in different departments. When young people come in we make sure that they are oriented into the culture of RYSE, because we understand the culture that is within the community and that is within the school is very much different than what the culture we are trying to create. Part of the way we do that is we make sure that we are consistent with the rules that we have within the space and also we're consistent around the way that we handle issues when they come up and consistent with how we treat young people. We do not show any favoritism toward certain young people depending on the way that they came in or how they're participating within RYSE. We make sure we give everybody a fair chance, and also we make sure that we're listening to young people and we work in partnership with young people. We're not dictating what they're doing; we want to make sure that we're listening. So part of the ways that we do that is every month we have house meetings when all the young people within the space come together and they talk about any suggestions that they may have for the center or any issues that might have come up that they want to address.

Young people are also given leadership opportunities, which I'll talk about later, but these leadership opportunities are geared towards systems change. We understand that it was a fight to obtain RYSE, but we understand that there's a larger fight within the larger system to make sure that young people have space to be able to heal and grow. Also, young people are given leadership opportunities as far as like dictating who comes in to RYSE, so young people are part of our hiring committee. So, dictating what staff they would like to come into our building, because we understand that this space is not for us, this space is for them. So they want to make sure they have choice in who comes into the space.

[**Slide:** *Leading with Love*]

BRIAN VILLA

And so our goal at RYSE is to really build authentic relationships with young people that are built upon foundations of love, empathy, and honesty. And so we welcome young people as they are, we want to meet them where they're at and be mindful of all that they carry with them. And we find it really integral that we provide spaces and structure that enable youth to dream, create, and take risk in healthy ways. We always make it a point to lead with love and come from a place of inquiry and understanding rather than of judgment. We avoid labels like good or bad behaviors because we understand that young people's behaviors are normal responses to abnormal situations, so really emphasizing that we're not focused on individual behavioral change, but more so systems change, and we want to change the environments and situations that they're in. A lot of times young people bear the burden of unjust policies and unjust systems, but we want to make sure that we're listening to them and we want to make sure that we validate their feelings.

This slide is really about how we create and maintain a culture at RYSE, where all of these values and practices become our norms and are integrated into all of our programs inside and out of RYSE. And so we create this culture where staff and youth keep each other accountable. In terms of staff, we have onboarding trainings that have to do with trauma-informed care, harm reduction, restorative justice, but when it comes down to it, what really matters is how we connect and acknowledge young people. And so we also offer culture institutes where we build and maintain relationships with each other—with youth and staff and adults—and youth in the end become culture builders and culture keepers, where they have a charge to hold space and keep each other accountable so that the values are integrated into all that we do here at RYSE

[**Slide:** *Examples of RYSE in Practice*]

In terms of listening with love, healing, and celebrating, once again, RYSE was created out of youth organizing. So we saw it as our responsibility to stay responsive to the needs of young people in the community. So, four years out, we decided that it was time again to ask young people about their experiences. And as service providers and adult allies, it was our responsibility to just listen. And so, as a result, we conducted our listening campaign, which was an inquiry of the experiences of trauma, coping, healing, and violence for young people of color in Richmond. We believe that young people's voices should be heard and valued in all systems including school sites, including healthcare, including government and policies, and that their stories and lived experiences should be the drivers and measures of justice and change and policy making. And the best thing that adult allies can do is to really listen, both individually and collectively, and validate young people's feelings, including anger.

And the listening campaign was definitely an opportunity and a space to elevate youth voice, expression, and action promoting justice and naming injustice. What we heard from the listening campaign was that young people have a fear of judgment from adults, and that they want relationships; they want adult mentors to guide them, they want to be able to have

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spaces to make mistakes without having to be lectured, and they want support. There's tremendous amount of stress that our young people are living within the community, and one of the quotes that we got from the listening campaign was that they were living with violence as if it were their siblings. So it just goes to show that violence and trauma is almost familial to our young people and so we really have to be able to identify what we need to do to create those systemic changes. So RYSE's work to date with the campaign has forged alliances and movements within and across juvenile justice, local government, public education, public health, social services, CBOs, in order to really invest in a more trauma-informed community that really gives primacy to the priorities, needs, and interests of young people of color.

From our listening campaign we developed our trauma healing learning series, which was designed to present and consider the impacts of multiple forms of violence, trauma, and oppression on youth and families of color in order to build a shared language, a shared commitment, and collective practice to supporting and implementing trauma-informed and healing-centered approaches. The trainings are geared towards those in the public health, community mental health sectors, and youth and family services, in order to really gain new insight into some of these practices. And, finally, a youth participatory action research project was also birthed out of the listening campaign, where our young people wanted to do their own inquiry and really led and define priorities and solutions to recover and heal from all these issues that they were going through. One of the topics was understanding coping strategies of young people, and what they got from it was that there was a tremendous mistrust of adults. Some of the quotes that they got was that it's easier to access something like weed than it is to talk or access an adult. And so it really emphasizes the importance of really creating genuine relationships built upon trust, so that young people feel comfortable accessing and coming to adults with anything that they need. Some of the recommendations that the youth developed was that adults need to have more trauma-informed practices and more systems that utilize restorative justice and harm addiction practices and policies.

ABBAS KHALID

I'll talk a little bit about holding space and also how we avoid labels. So one about holding space—we make sure that we want to hold space for young people for leadership as well as for healing. So part of the ways we hold space for young people as far as leadership, we have something called the RYSE Youth Organizing Team, which is a group of five to eight youth interns who have made the choice to develop their skills as a leader and prioritize the health of their community. Through our RYSE youth leadership team, young people are given the space to build their leadership and the leadership of their peers through facilitating programs and leading organizing efforts to continue to push the city of Richmond to prioritize young people. The Youth Organizing Team are supported by staff to take risk in their personal lives to move towards healing, liberation…and liberation of their communities.

Also, the young people are given opportunities to move up within the organization through, like, internships and also establish various specific departments, to support the department, and to develop their own programs. We also have several staff, I think about a third of our staff are alumni of the RYSE Center. Also, we make sure that we try to hold space for healing because there has been violence—like Brian had said—violence happens in our community. So

just over the last month we've had four young people within Richmond who have been killed. So as a response, we make sure that we opened our doors for the larger community to restore that harm. So we had circles that we conducted. We also gave space for the community and the young people to create art, to create art around the young people, to create an altar, create shirts, and also even wear like pictures. And it was just more for them the symbolism of healing, you know, and really making sure that we're listening to how they would like to heal.

Lastly, we try to make sure that we're avoiding labels. So, I work with young people who are high risk or currently detained in juvenile halls. So I ensure that we provide services pre- and post-release to support the successful reentry into their community. Most of these young people have consistently been labeled as troublemakers by their teachers, peers, and by the system. We ensure the RYSE community avoids labeling these young people who need more support. Youth Justice staff will provide intensive case management to support the young people in implementing their plan and link them to necessary supports including educational, health, housing, and legal provided onsite or by partner organizations.

LEORA WOLF-PRUSAN

That was an incredible brief and powerful insight into the work of RYSE, and we're really grateful to Brian and Abbas for being here. We wanted to open it to questions. So we've got a couple of questions that already came up in the chat box. For the first question that we want to ask Brian and Abbas is, how RYSE interacts with schools, how do you partner with schools, kind of like in terms of creating referral systems or offering workshops in schools, and what does your work in schools look like?

ABBAS KHALID

I have a perfect example of that—like, right after this call, I'll be heading over to Crestview Middle School, which is a middle school within the Contra Costa County, and I go into the school to provide young men's group. So the school contacted us and was mentioning that they were having some troubles dealing with young people who were very much, like, affected by trauma. And these kids were a lot of times being sent out for willful defiance, and they were trying to figure out what are some other ways of dealing, or really supporting these young people because the teacher themselves were having a hard time of managing a classroom as well as managing the trauma that these young people were facing, so they contacted us to really be able to do an intense young men's group as well as a sister circle to develop their skills with coping as well as their way of communicating with their peers, and just their development.

BRIAN VILLA

Yeah, and going off of what Abbas said, all of our program departments really try to form relationships with each of the school sites at the school district. Our education and career program is doing college access work in the different school sites. Our community health program really connects with the school-based health centers in providing services and support groups. We're connected with our Media Arts and Culture Programs doing spoken word and healing workshops. And we make it a point to really engage ourselves with the school site and

with the administration and teachers, and every year before the school year starts, I know that a lot of schools, like, really refer and recommend that new teachers come and get a tour of RYSE and see what we have available. I know when I'm at the school sites I really push for counselors—both in the clinical side and the academic side—to really see what we're all about, so we're not just a kind of abstract idea but they really have a sense of what we offer and that they're able to make appropriate referrals.

[**Slide:** *Q&A*]

LEORA WOLF-PRUSAN

So we have another question about what can folks do if they wanted to start a RYSE-like approach in their own communities; what would you suggest their first steps be?

ABBAS KHALID

I would propose the first step will be kind of our first step. So what we did is really having, like, a needs assessment. So assessing what are the needs from within your community and then taking it from there about creating a plan for the community, about what would they want their center to look like, what services would they want to provide, and what is the culture that you would want to create within the center.

BRIAN VILLA

Yeah, like, for the survey that we conducted way back in 2000, the needs assessment, we asked young people what they wanted and it was really interesting to see that almost across the board the number one thing that young people prioritized was that they wanted to receive mental health services. That was the number one choice, and it wasn't like, "Oh, yeah, we need, like, you know, a basketball court," but they specifically identified mental health services and just a space where they can be themselves.

LEORA WOLF-PRUSAN

So there's a question that I can potentially answer—and Brian and Abbas, feel free—around how do we navigate mandatory reporting within schools and also try to be an ally and advocate for students? So that's a beautiful question because it holds up that oftentimes, schools have policies both received from state but also received from their local education agency around their decision-making powers. And so I want to acknowledge that this conversation has really been promoting young people to have voice and choice, and oftentimes that that lives in tension with the culture of the school, and, or, especially if we're talking about mental health and some of the practices and policies that exist in the mental health field. The first piece that I would say around the navigation—which is a great verb—around navigating mandatory reporting, is that oftentimes in our school communities, rules are implicit and the way in which young people are referred and why they're referred, to whom they're referred, isn't always necessarily explicitly discussed with a young person. And so I think that the word "choice" and "agency" is also wedded to the word "informed." So even if there may not be an opportunity for a young person to change his specific policy or practice due to external regulations in that culture, absolutely that young person can still be completely informed about, around what is

happening and why it's happening. And so the call would be to when a young person is existing within a community, how are we as adults making the rules and norms explicit, and, more importantly, the why. Because we want any rule or norm in a community to also be rooted in positive youth development: "This is in place so that you X, Y, Z." Go ahead.

BRIAN VILLA

Yeah, and I can add a little bit about how we kind of look at mandated reporting because, you know, here at RYSE, you know, we are mandated reporters but we like to shift the narrative of that and kind of, like, call ourselves "mandated responders," and so really responding to, like, the young person's needs and really seeing how we can also shift, like, maybe the systems that they're being referred to. So, for example, I know in Abbas's department, in Youth Justice, they work in partnership with probation to make sure that they're also trained in restorative and harm reduction practices.

LEORA WOLF-PRUSAN

Thank you. So we have another question that also gives us a little bit of a preview to our webinar next week on self and collective healing strategies for youth- serving educators. There's a question for the two of you around what are your practices—both RYSE practices and your practices—that offer support, your self-care for preventing secondary trauma in your own agency and organization?

BRIAN VILLA

So we definitely recognize that self-care is really important, and we also need to model self-care if we're supporting our young people and also their health and wellness. And so we actually at RYSE make intentional spaces for our staff to be able to process, to be able to heal. This past month has been really difficult for our staff; like, we've been heavily impacted with a death almost every week. Some of the young people are members of our center and a lot of young people know them. So, as a result, we made intentional spaces for our staff to be able to have time to process, like, we were given some comp days, we also offered different self-care practices like acupuncture, massages, and really just a space to process, and we held spaces for our staff to really process, and we provided a healing circle for ourselves as well. And whatever we need…whatever we needed to do to take care of ourselves, we're really mindful in supporting each other as well.

[**Slide:** *What's the connection between youth healing leadership and educator self & collective care?*]

LEORA WOLF-PRUSAN

Great, thank you. So that's a really beautiful transition into talking about what looks ahead. Before we do that, I want to really end with, again, why we're having this conversation—the connection between youth healing, leadership, and educator self-care. So if there's any takeaway that we might walk away with from this conversation, the invitation is that anytime that we are both leading or receiving system change or services change or self change around understanding the relationship between trauma and resilience and our own work, that we explicitly hold accountable to figuring out and assessing ways in which young people are involved in that process and in that conversation. And so we wanted to again offer, as we move into talking about self and collective care next week, what might be the connection between this practice and our own practices.

So I came up with two ideas; I'm wondering if any of you have other suggestions. For me, I know that youth leading their own healing is explicitly tied to my own self-care, in that preparing to support our work for our youth living with chronic trauma, that it also really calls into the conversation around equity because then I need to make sure that the systems and services that I'm providing are responsive, contextual, and equitable for all people accessing that. And that, to me, is a practice of collective care, and then it also prevents me—as Brian was saying—from experiencing secondary traumatic stress or burnout, because oftentimes our healing is interdependent to the healing of young people.