Your Life Matters Recommendations
Presented to Mayor Ballard
11/15/14

RECOMMENDATIONS

While educational matters are addressed in the Justice and Education sections of this report, it is critical to emphasize the importance of programs, initiatives and policies that enforce the engagement and retention of young Black boys in the pre-K-12 educational system. The Resources subcommittee identified a huge gap in services to disconnected youth ages 14-17 once they become disengaged from the educational process. Economists estimate that increasing high school graduation rates would decrease violent crime by 20%. Thus, the best prevention strategy to keep disconnected youth, particularly young Black boys, out of the criminal justice system is to keep them in school. It is critical that we catch students before they drop out. However, if they happen to become disengaged from the educational process, for whatever reasons, the proper infrastructure and culture must exist to shepherd them to alternative opportunities, including "quality" alternative schools that are focused on their individual needs.

Creation of a repository of information and dissemination to stakeholders (media, government officials, etc.) for YLM's findings and similar studies to foster follow up, accountability and continued focus. Creation of this repository should be expedited, building on current efforts to achieve reliable and consistent data. This recommendation includes mandating the use of common definitions and terminology when collecting, recording and analyzing data. Information can be utilized to issue a call to action to discuss opportunities to help or to support initiatives that have positive outcomes for Black males.

Ensure that the YLM Initiative either resides in the Mayor's office (current and future) and/or an outside organization that has the capacity and expertise to lead such effort. Public will must also be created to help implement the recommendations. Without community will and continued focus, the effort will be lost. Past experience has shown a lot of task force reports brimming with solid recommendations end up gathering dust on a shelf and not carried out due to bureaucratic battles and administration changes. The hope is that agreed upon solutions and recommendations in the report will be legislated through policy to achieve outcomes. We also hope that the entire community will recognize that everyone is needed to improve outcomes for young Black men and boys.

Drive the development of successful cross sector community collaboration by prioritizing funding for programs that meet multiple needs of the target group or work collaboratively with other organizations with expertise in additional areas to address interrelated issues faced by this group. The barriers facing Black young men in Indianapolis are vast and complex. Consequently, collaboration between a number of organizations will allow organizations to provide a pooling of both tangible and information-based resources, sharing of ideas and information, diversification of individual talents, competencies and capabilities between agencies, and prevent the overlap in services and coordination of existing services. These collaborations create shared accountability and responsibility and provide a seamless support system reflective of the pipeline of services to targeted individuals. A preferred infrastructure regularly consists of a "one-stop shop" organization or agency that collaborates with multiple service providers to provide comprehensive services.

Encourage programs that are data rich and that provide program supporters with information about progress and successful behavior changes. Encourage funders to fund programs driven by measurable outcomes. With programs facing a growing emphasis on accountability for achieving results, decision makers such as funders and service providers are increasingly making programmatic choices based on results. These programs have shown to be effective through rigorous research and can assist organizations with developing and implementing programs that are driven by measurable outcomes.

Encourage funders to provide funds for organizational capacity to track and evaluate program data. A widespread challenge for non-profit organizations working with disconnected youth is the ability to collect and analyze programmatic results. Research has shown that nonprofits have significant barriers to conducting effective evaluations. Barriers include limited staff time, lack of financial resources, lack of sufficient evaluation expertise, and lack of leadership support for evaluation. Funding support is needed to help non-profits build capacity to collect and track data and then evaluate such data to appropriately scale their programs and improve outcomes.

Require programs to provide a focus and vision for the future which engages youth as leaders to the solution. The positive impact of youth involvement in the planning and implementation of programs which have direct impact on their lives is critical. Youth should be given an opportunity to assist with creating culturally relevant youth development, mentoring and life coaching programs for their peers and programs that reflect their own cultural identity.
**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Create an ambitious, regional, cross sector youth employment initiative, which provides multiple pathways to success. Indianapolis has an opportunity to make great strides forward in youth employment by creating an ambitious youth employment initiative. Keys to a successful youth employment initiative include, but are not limited to, the following recommendations:

a. **We recommend a cross sector partnership-based model, or collective impact initiative, as opposed to a top-down programmatic approach.** Most researchers and policy advocates recommend a partnership-based, rather than a program-based model for improving employment outcomes for at-risk youth and adults. Research has shown that work itself is the strongest and most effective “program” for increasing the likelihood of at-risk individuals attaining more work in the future. Partnerships between governments, community programs, and local businesses can provide opportunities for providing entry-level, career-building experiences for at-risk populations.

   At this preliminary stage, we do not believe that the creation of a new organization or entity is necessary to create an ambitious youth employment initiative, if the initiative was led by a strong leader with Central Indiana’s private, public, philanthropic and educational sectors committed to achieving results.

b. **The initiative must be comprehensive, and include development of life skills and work readiness skills; not just job skills.** Any serious effort to create pathways to employment for youth must acknowledge that we have a work readiness problem, and not simply a job skills deficit. Development of life skills and work readiness skills must be a hallmark of the initiative.

   Moving forward, Indianapolis should not re-invent the wheel. Other cities and states have created collaborative efforts including Baltimore YouthWorks, Philadelphia Youth Initiative, San Diego Workforce Partnership, JobsFirst NYC and the Maine Youth Transition Collaborative— with many documented successes and lessons learned.

**Identify community youth employment programs that are already working in our community, and scale those efforts.**

Clean for Green is a summer employment program for teenagers that were started two years ago by Pastor James Jackson of Fervent Prayer Church, in partnership with Community Alliance of the Far Eastside (CAFÉ). Participating teenagers must commit to a six-week program which helps youth develop work readiness skills and life skills. The teenagers work on community beautification projects including trash cleaning, for four hours per shift and make $25 each shift. The program received a $10,000 grant from the Public Safety Foundation last fall for additional mentoring and employment opportunities, and leveraged the grant with contributions from businesses. This past summer, more than 400 teens filled more than 1,000 youth job units in the Clean for Green program over six weeks.

   As the community seeks to “scale what works,” churches are some of the most promising partners to make an impact on youth unemployment. Churches and faith-based organizations play a critical role (spiritual, cultural, convening) in any neighborhood, and often have a unique ability to leverage public, private, philanthropic, and in-kind resources. As we make youth employment a higher priority in the economic development of our community, we recommend that churches who already have established youth employment programs recruit and partner with other churches, and encourage other churches to make youth employment a key part of their ministry and mission outreach. Many community initiatives similar to Clean for Green are already working, but simply need more visibility, business partners, and funding. As mentioned earlier, a youth employment need not re-invent the wheel; it can leverage existing programs already working in our community.

**Promote careers that are projected to be in high demand in Central Indiana, that do not require a four year college degree.** As a community, we know what skills are in high demand among employers. Reports including Hire Up Indy indicate that Indianapolis needs more nurses, truck drivers, and aviation technicians, for example, than it currently produces through its educational system. Not all these careers require a four year college degree. Some of Indianapolis’ most in-demand careers require just one or two years of career and technical education. Our community’s youth employment strategy should help expose young Black males to the most in-demand careers in our community, including those that do not require a four year college degree.

**Provide incentives for existing small business and social enterprise programs to hire youth.** Small business programs and incentives are growing at a rapid rate in Central Indiana. The Indy Chamber’s Entrepreneurial Services division, for example, saw nearly 2,000 small businesses in 2013 and possesses a microloan fund of more than $2 million dollars and growing. More and
more banks are now participating in the program, and the Indy Chamber also houses the State of Indiana Small Business Development Center. The Indy Chamber and other partners could utilize these existing programs and other economic development incentives to promote the hiring of youth among small businesses.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Advance initiatives to encourage corporate, government and other employees to mentor. Consider modeling other cities like Pittsburgh who have offered employees paid time to mentor. The task force supports an effort by The Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce, supported by the Indiana Youth Institute, to roll out a pilot initiative in partnership with local member corporations to encourage employee volunteer service as mentors to middle school youth with quality mentoring organizations. The task force also encourages a public awareness strategy to promote employer Volunteer Time Off policies that allocate paid time for employees who volunteer as ongoing mentors.

Support awareness and outreach initiatives that promote the value and need for mentoring. One way to provide public awareness is to actively promote National Mentoring Month in January. Indianapolis should also reface the momentum of the “Our Children, Our City” series led by The Indianapolis Star to support a city-wide initiative to highlight community success stories and inspire more individuals to act. Other strategies include efforts to activate a social marketing campaign that encourages community engagement in mentoring and the development of partnerships with local radio and television stations and media to create a public awareness campaign that encourages Black men to mentor.

Integrate mentoring into holistic approaches to drive achievement and increase opportunity at school, home, and in the workforce. Differentiation of mentoring services and engagement opportunities is encouraged to establish the best “fit” between youth/families, provider agencies, and mentors. Mentoring providers should be convened to seek out opportunities for collaboration, shared resources, improved quality, and increased scale in our community. In particular, it’s critical to differentiate service that can be appropriately provided by average volunteers (e.g., mentoring program) vs. services that required paid professionals (e.g., mental health services).

Develop strategic collaborations and explore new funding sources for mentoring programs. In order to be sustainable, mentoring programs need to look at a variety of funding sources (federal, state, and local levels from public and private) to meet programmatic objectives. It is critical that they develop meaningful collaborations and partner with local community entities such as Indy Parks, social service agencies, IMPD and the Marion County Sheriff’s department, local colleges and universities, businesses, and city government to ensure maximization of resources.

Encourage funders to fund capacity building efforts of mentoring organizations to align themselves with evidence-based standards of practice, including the Indiana Quality Mentoring Standards. The variety of mentoring programs available today can make it a challenge for parents and guardians to assess quality. Mentoring programs should be designed and structured to ensure program practices meet quality standards that are safe and effective. The Indiana Quality Mentoring Standards outline keys to achieving effective practice and the delivery of high-quality mentoring programs.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Scale programs at all levels to afford opportunity for all incarcerated offenders to receive services and treatment. When examining the high recidivism rate, a major gap is the lack of programming and services received by individuals while they are incarcerated. A correctional facility representative acknowledged that capacity constraints exist that limits the provision of services to all level offenders, particularly those that serve less than 12 months. According to the representative, “so much attention and focus is paid to offenders with longer sentences or noticeable mental or substance abuse issues that little or no attention is provided to offenders with lesser sentences.” Re-entry programming must begin prior to release (first day in) and not upon post-release. Unfortunately, this service gap may contribute to the likelihood for re-offenses among low level offenders.

Work to support IMCCRPSC’s policy recommendations to reduce gaps in the current reentry service delivery model, including the enhancement and development of best-practice re-entry programs. IMCCRPSC provided a list of comprehensive recommendations, which included the need for important collaborations as well as service-delivery components to provide comprehensive services to ex-offenders. An effective service-delivery model aimed to reduce recidivism must effectively address all of the collateral consequences experienced by ex-offenders with a criminal record, including the lack of transportation (and inability to obtain a valid driver’s license), employment, housing, the accumulation of high debt from imprisonment and child support debt that continues to accumulate while incarcerated. Again, it is important to highlight that reentry programming must begin prior to release (first day in) and not post-release.
A model to consider is the Bexar County Jail Diversion Program, which is one of 16 federally, funded National Diversion Programs. The program provides comprehensive, coordinated services and resources focusing on identification, diversion from jail and continuity of care for individuals who are about to enter or have entered the criminal justice system. The program focuses on addressing the needs of persons with mental illnesses, while providing treatment within the least restrictive and clinically appropriate setting.

The new Marion County criminal justice complex, proposed to open in 2015, could follow this model. Included in the design is dedicated space for programs “behind the walls” along with re-entry services that are intended to prepare individuals for release to the community. If individuals were released directly to this re-entry “diagnostic” center, they could receive immediate access to the services and supports that have been proven to reduce the chance of recidivism. The re-entry space should include re-entry provider co-located work space, where agencies that provide case management and referrals could be housed. Providers that specialize in re-entry, such as PACE, might have a full-time satellite office. Amongst the providers, a continuum of services should be made available, including case management/care coordination, including benefit enrollment, legal and financial services, housing placement, employment assessment and referral, support referrals by anonymous or faith-based groups, and health referrals if no health providers are onsite.

Currently, re-entrants only receive a 3-day prescription when they leave the Marion County jail. A health clinic could possibly be managed by Eskenazi, HealthNet or another community health center, where re-entrants could utilize health care navigators to sign up for health insurance, get a physical/ mental health assessment, and access necessary medications.

Lastly, efforts to scale up programs will include the necessary training of staff at all levels on best practice re-entry service-delivery. Work to establish incentives to allow inmates the opportunity to work off fees they accrue as part of their sentencing. As explained by an ex-offender when asked how he felt about re-entry and the current sentencing laws in Indiana...

“When I was locked up, they took my freedom. But they provided me with a warm place to sleep, 3 meals a day, cable, medical attention, and other things. But when I was released and they gave me my freedom back, I had nothing. No money. And I couldn’t get a decent paying gig, no place to live or sleep. I couldn’t go to my mother’s house for fear I would interfere with her assistance or section 8. And to make matters worse, I had a ton of fees [including child support] that I had accumulated while locked up that I had to pay now that I was out. I had no way to catch up!”

To help alleviate this barrier, we recommend that an assessment be conducted to determine the feasibility of an employment model that allows offenders to work off their fees. These include pre-conviction and post-conviction fees such as restitution, drug testing and/or treatment, counseling, probation, home detention monitoring, parole as well as child support and driver’s license fees. While inmates have an opportunity to earn money for working while incarcerated, their salaries are very low (approximately $0.65 per day). This money is then put into a fund which allows them to buy hygiene, snacks and other items not provided by the facility. Additionally, since many males incarcerated are required to pay child support, they should receive counseling and assistance with filing the necessary paperwork to modify their childcare payments while they are incarcerated.

Work to create new and innovative ways to incentivize businesses to recruit, train, and/or hire ex-offenders. Despite the current business incentive programs that exist to promote the hiring of ex-offenders, the buy-in from private employers has been low. Unfortunately, 71% of private businesses say they are unlikely to hire an ex-offender. In order to increase employer buy-in and increase the likelihood of employment for ex-offenders, we agree with many recommendations already put forth by IMCCRPSC, which include: (1) engaging employers and dispelling stereotypes and assumptions about ex-offenders; (2) considering policies that prohibit or limit an employer’s ability to ask about criminal records; (3) supporting ways to help ex-offenders expunge or seal their records; and (4) providing financial incentives for employers to hire ex-offenders.

**JUVENILE JUSTICE**

Work to develop and implement alternative programming in lieu of school to police contact. There is no question that educators have many responsibilities and an unruly child should not hinder the educational progress of his or her fellow classmates. School districts in Indianapolis currently employ discipline policies and practices that push students out of the classroom and into the criminal justice system. Moreover, schools refer children – black males disproportionately so – to law enforcement at a distressing rate. According to the Indianapolis Police Department, nearly 35% of school referrals were for offenses not involving guns, drugs, or other weapons.

Amend Ind. Code §35-50-8 to change requirement that juvenile courts must report to schools that children have a ‘true’ finding for a felony even if the conviction is a non-school related offense. Regardless of whether or not an adjudicated offense is school related, the juvenile court must report to the schools that a child has a true finding for a felony. Unfortunately, Black children accounted for nearly 43% of all out-of-school suspensions in Marion County in 2013. Unfortunately, schools use the “conviction” to expel children at a disproportionately alarming rate.

Alternatives to out-of-school suspension must be put into place immediately. Leadership on all levels and the community should work to develop a comprehensive and collaborative partnership of stakeholders charged with developing alternatives to out-of-school suspension. There is a direct correlation between the amount of education a young person does not receive and the likelihood he or she may end up in prison. The easiest way for a young person not to be educated is to not have them attend
school. It’s nearly impossible to learn if you’re never in class. Ironically, one of the common reasons for out-of-school suspensions is ‘attendance.’

Require schools to provide additional information to the Indiana Department of Education when the code “other” is used on the state report. It is alarming that the most common reason for out of school suspensions is the ambiguous category of ‘other.’ There is certainly a need to examine the definition of ‘other’ and limit its use as much as possible in order to track and ascertain the specific reasons behind suspensions. It is more important, however, to develop alternatives to removing young people from the environment they need the most.

Work to develop a longitudinal outlook/study on the effects of Reactive Attachment Disorder & Brain Development and its impact on child to adult behavior. A combination of local health experts and agencies, including the Marion County Health Department, the Indiana Criminal Justice Institute, the Indiana Department of Child Services, juvenile courts, and public school systems should collaboratively work together to determine the effects of RAD and its correlation with student involvement in the juvenile justice system.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Emphasize and support early childhood educational opportunities, including pre-kindergarten, to facilitate students’ ability to develop research-based foundational skills and succeed academically. The benefits of early childhood education are well-known and undisputed. Children, particularly minority students, who participate in an early childhood education program show higher levels of educational attainment, socioeconomic status, and job skills, lower rates of substance abuse, felony arrests and incarceration than their non-program participant counterparts.

Modify Ind. Code §20-33-8-12 to specify that all public schools, including charter schools, must have a written discipline policy that addresses PBIS and Restorative Justice to minimize the number of exclusionary discipline practices. School discipline policies must set clear expectations of behavior, use research-based interventions, such as PBIS and RJ when practicable. Compelling data and research shows that punitive, zero tolerance policies often exacerbate behavior issues for students. Students who are suspended or expelled are also at much greater risk of dropping out of school. Currently, charter schools are not legally required to have a written disciplinary policy and they should not be exempt from this recommendation. Students attending charter schools should also benefit from proper safeguards that prohibit disparate exclusionary discipline practices.

Require additional information to be provided when the term “other” is used by schools completing the state report for suspensions and expulsions to minimize the number of exclusionary discipline practices. As described on page 27 of this report, 5,765 out-of-school suspensions were for “other.” The fact that these suspensions did not fall under any of the 15 other reasons/codes calls into question the reasons that these students are experiencing exclusionary discipline and whether such discipline in those cases was appropriate or necessary.

Prohibit out of school suspensions for attendance problems to minimize the number of exclusionary discipline practices. Suspending students from school for tardiness or truancy is ineffective and can result in disparate exclusionary discipline practices. Student engagement starts with having students in school. Excluding students from school for attendance violation does not represent best practice and is counterproductive to student success. Additionally, suspending students for attendance problems is likely to lead to academic gaps due to loss of instruction, which could lead to future behavioral problems.

Modify the current Annual Percentage Rate (APR) requirement in Ind. §Code 20-20-8-8lvii to include disaggregation of academic performance data and discipline data (by percentage of students) by race, grade, gender, F/R lunch status and eligibility for special education. The Indiana General Assembly has passed legislation that requires every school corporation, including charter schools, to create and publish an annual performance report that provides information in multiple areas. The reporting requirement puts Indiana ahead of other states that have been criticized by researchers for not making discipline data more readily available. In addition to the data provided for school and school corporation category designations, Indiana requires school to post an APR on the school’s page and on the Department’s page. The APR must information regarding student performance on state tests, discipline data, academic programs, and certain financial information such as teacher salary. Unfortunately, many schools reports do not include all of the required information, it can be difficult for parents to find the information, and the data is not required to be disaggregated. In order for teachers, administrators, parents and others to identify trends in disciplinary actions, the data should be disaggregated and easily accessible.

Modify the current APR requirement in Ind. Code §20-20-8-8 to include the number of special education proceedings (by the percentage of students) in which a school has been found to have committed due process violation and require that this be published along with other school accountability information. Students with disabilities have specific procedural protections when receiving suspension more than 10 days (whether aggregate (if related) or consecutive days). Students with disabilities may be best served with a BIP in place to mitigate behavioral challenges. However, the large numbers of students with
disabilities who experience exclusionary discipline have led researchers to question whether schools are honoring the students’ rights under IDEA. For these reasons, providing a report regarding the number of determined due process violations by school corporate, including charter schools, is that easily accessible to parents and the community will provide useful, transparent information regarding how schools serve students with disabilities.

**Encourage approved teacher preparation programs to include coursework on Social Justice or imbued the content into appropriate existing program coursework.** Students preparing to work in schools as teachers or other school professionals need a sound professional knowledge base to understand learning and the context of schools, families, and communities. They must comprehend and be able to apply knowledge related to the social, historical and philosophical foundations of education, professional ethics, law and policy. They also must understand language acquisition, cultural influences on learning, diversity of student populations, families, and communities and inclusion and equity in classrooms and schools. This recommendation will allow students pursuing a teaching degree to fully understand the implications of exclusionary discipline, including suspension and expulsion on students, families, communities and schools.

**Require the collection and reporting of data for number of requests for police dispatch and arrests.** Currently, data pertaining to police dispatch and arrests for schools is not being collected in a systematic way. Disaggregated data should be collected in a central location so parents, educators and policymakers can access information to ascertain more fully the prevalence of arrests and disparate outcomes. This is necessary for policymakers, educators, advocates and community leaders to focus attention and resources on the problem and determine which approaches to use to address it. Additionally, parents should be allowed to access this data to determine whether their school of choice has a culture that works for their students.

**Amend Ind. Code §20-31-5 to require schools to address the concepts of RTI in their Strategic and Continuous School Improvement and Achievement Plans.** When done properly, RTI ensures that students have responsive academic interventions in their education setting and that teachers are using effective pedagogy – incorporating different teaching strategies with students with different learning styles, backgrounds and abilities to improve learning outcomes. Not all students learn the same way and if students do not learn the way one teaches does not mean they have a learning disability. RTI promotes the wellbeing of students, teachers, and the school community. All schools are required to update their School Improvement Plan annually. Requiring schools to incorporate specific strategies that encompass RTI could increase academic success for all children and further decrease the number of Black males that may incorrectly be identified as having a learning disability.

**Encourage teachers and administrators to complete some of their required PGPs in areas related to PBIS and Restorative Discipline, culturally responsible instruction and classroom management, Civil Rights and Social Justice and RTI.** Quality teacher instruction and classroom management is essential to student success, both academically and socially. Teaching quality and school leadership are the most important factors in raising student achievement. It is critical that teachers and administrators continue to learn and incorporate best-practice models, such as PBIS, RJ, RTI in a culturally competent manner in their classrooms and school environment.

**Provide statutory right to alternative school for expelled students.** Indiana does not require districts or schools to provide alternative educational services to expelled students. Pursuant to Indiana Code §20-33-8-31, Indiana students who are expelled are not in violation of the compulsory attendance law. The parent or guardian of an expelled student may not enroll the student in another district without disclosing the expulsion and the consent of the district pursuant to Indiana Code §20-33-8-30 in order to provide an alternative educational environment for expelled students. Indiana should look at other states, including California, Colorado, Pennsylvania, Tennessee and Washington. For instance, pursuant to Colorado Revised Statue 22-33-205, the Expelled and At-Risk Student Services (EARRS) program was created and authorized to fund competitive grant proposals to school systems to provide educational services to expelled students. EARRS exists to assist districts, charter schools and private schools with their statutory obligation to provide alternative educational services that are agreed to by parents to expelled students.

**Ensure access to rigorous instruction in alternative schools by clarifying those teachers in alternative programs fall within the definition of certificated employee under Ind. Code §20-28-11.5-4 for required teacher evaluations, and require that student data is included in school building and school corporation accountability.** Indiana, like other states, has alternative schools. Alternative schools have the flexibility to offer innovative or nontraditional approaches to education and were designed to provide educational opportunities to students whose needs were not met in the traditional setting. However, alternative schools have been subject to criticism for lack of quality instruction and for lack of academic opportunity. Like regular schools, alternative schools should be held accountable for academic results.

**Ensure that students in in-school suspension continue to have access to rigorous instruction.** The basic in-school suspension model ensures that students will not receive a free “vacation” day from school due to their non-compliance. While educators agree that keeping suspended students in school is better than having them home unsupervised, a mere room and a teacher for in-school suspension is not sufficient. A model ISS structured program addresses multiple student issues and can help them return back to class faster and stay there. The most effective in-school suspension programs address educational and social needs because suspended students often have both academic and behavioral problems. An in-school suspension program should be one part of a school-wide strategy for creating and sustaining a positive, nurturing school climate and is an important element of the overall dropout prevention and delinquency prevention strategies for aiding disconnected and disruptive students.

**Continue to allow parents options that enable parents to place their children in schools that align with their children’s learning styles and interests.** In Indiana, parents are permitted to choose from a diverse menu of school options that works best
for their child. Students have gained access to educational opportunities that otherwise may have been out of their reach because of their address. The task force recommends that education and outreach on school choice continues so that more parents and families are aware of their options.

**Continue to support credit recovery schools for individuals over 18 without diplomas, where either industry certification or dual-credit opportunities are offered and emphasized.** Indiana law grants each individual a right to a free, public education and H.S. Diploma, which continues until receipt regardless of age. A G.E.D. is not considered equivalent to a diploma and has not been interpreted to extinguish a student’s right to a diploma. Since Indiana law does not terminate the right to a diploma at a particular age, there are “adult high schools” that are designed to meet the needs of adult students but offer a H.S. Diploma and not a GED, which qualifies these schools for state funding.

Drop out recovery charter schools such as Goodwill Industries’ Excel Centers and Christel House Academy Drop Out Recovery School (DORS) offer dual-credit coursework through partnership with Ivy Tech Community College and/or industry credentials so that graduating adults have the opportunity to achieve not only a diploma but also work towards industry credentials and/or college degrees that will enable the students to be more competitive in achieving employment. Under Indiana law, high school students are able to participate in dual credit opportunities that provide both credit towards a high school diploma and credits towards college degrees. Additionally, the State Board of Education A-F accountability system considers students’ receipt of three or more college credits via a dual credit program as part of a school’s college and career readiness score. The receipt of college credits from a dual credit program is also a component of the Core 40 with Honors diploma and the Technical Honors high school graduation diplomas. In 2013, these schools were removed out of the traditional school funding formula and have a separate funding stream to sustain their operations. Schools like the Excel Center and Christel House Academy DORS are great opportunities for older adults to receive their high school diploma while completing industry level certification or obtaining dual college credits.

**Develop a grant program for innovations in developing a positive school environment, and allow the fund to be used to provide wraparound services or for professional development in the areas of restorative justice, PBIS, school – health partnerships and cultural competency.** Research continues to show the relationship between access to health care and students’ ability to succeed in education. School programs that have wrap around services, including health care, have been successful with increasing student attendance. Research has shown that improved educational outcomes lead to better health outcomes later in life. Health partnerships have been successful in increasing school attendance rates. When kids are healthier, they learn better. The challenge is these partnerships are expensive and require resources for schools to monitor. Grant opportunities like Innovations in Education could allocate a percentage of funding to initiatives such as school health partnerships, wrap around services and the development of behavior management systems.

**Encourage charter organizers to limit hiring of building-level administrators to those who have developed a background in special education law, student discipline, working with diverse learners, and cultural competency.** Traditional LEA’s are required to hire a licensed principal that has a Master’s Degree from an accredited University. The individual must have completed coursework in special education law, student discipline, and cultural competency, involving diverse student learners, in order to obtain their licensure. The task force does not suggest that charter organizers only hire a licensed administrator. Rather, the taskforce emphasizes that the building level administrator must have appropriate experience and skill sets to ensure children receive the right opportunities to be successful both academically and socially.

**Consider amending Ind. Code §20-24 to require charter schools to either participate in the USDA lunch and breakfast programs or provide an alternative lunch, so that all students are enabled to succeed in school.** Research shows a strong link between childhood hunger and socio-emotional health. Students who are hungry are more likely to exhibit behavioral problems and students who are hungry are less likely to make academic gains. Under Ind. Code §20-26-9, Indiana public and accredited nonpublic schools are able to participate in the U.S. Department of Agriculture (“USDA”) school lunch and breakfast programs. All traditional public schools participate and many charter schools and nonpublic schools participate. The current drafting of Indiana Code §20-24-8-5 and Ind. Code §20-26-9 provides Charter Schools with flexibility for participating in the USDA school lunch program and flexibility under the mandate for traditional public school to participate in the breakfast program if 15% or more of their student body would qualify. The result is that many but not all charter schools participate in these programs. An alternative lunch should be provided to help place children on a path to success.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

Health care organizations and social service agencies must work collectively and individually on effective program offerings, outreach and marketing strategies by (1) providing and offering culturally sensitive health and social services along with information to Black males that will facilitate entry into health/social service programs; (2) marketing health care services in a manner that will attract African American males to utilize these services (most services via media seem to focus on females and/or seniors); (3) decreasing barriers which prevent Black males from accessing services(i.e. offer more evening hours at clinics/community centers to accommodate work hours); (4) designing and implementing youth violence prevention projects as
Convene a meeting among health care providers (specifically, local Federally Qualified Health Center operators of school-based clinics) and social service agencies to establish framework for coordination of activities and services targeted for Black youth. Provide comprehensive primary health care services to anyone regardless of their ability to pay, and enable health care access to those affected by youth violence. Organization must also strategically market this importance, so as to reduce the stigma attached to seeking out and mental health services. Examples include the provision 48 of affordable mental health services in clinics, community health centers and the offering of life skill, anger-management, and violence prevention classes in non-traditional places and not mental health centers. Productive alternatives include hosting youth programs at churches or local YMCAs.

Encourage local funders 1) to emphasize the importance of data collection, tracking and sharing and 2) to provide support to health care providers and social service agencies to gather, track and report data regarding youth who access public health services. Unfortunately, many health care and social service organizations do not track and report data on relevant demographics, services, and health outcomes. In order for policymakers, health care professionals and the community to identify trends in disparate health care treatment and/or access, data should not only be tracked and shared but also be disaggregated and easily accessible.

Mandate that health care professionals receive training in the recognition of factors that contribute to youth violence including poverty, truancy, and mental health. Programs must educate, through various mediums and with positive reflection, the healthcare community on the importance of utilizing mental health services. Specific training could include (1) screening for risk factors for youth violence. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, risk factors include, but are not limited to: drug, alcohol, or tobacco use, association with delinquent peers, poor family functioning and poor grades in school; and (2) the creation of partnerships with other health care and social service organizations and agencies to address the risk factors for youth violence. Activities may include enhanced communications regarding victims and those at risk, referral arrangements, and joint community-based activities.

Encourage Central Indiana Leadership Council, Indiana Minority Mental Health Professionals Association, local social services agencies and other health care providers to work collaboratively and focus on best practices to determine how best to provide health care and social services to underrepresented communities. Convening a meeting among the groups will be an initial step to achieving this goal. Programs must do more outreach in the Black communities – especially among young males to highlight preventative efforts in recognizing symptoms of depression, anxiety, anger management, and other mental health issues. Outreach outlets include the use of mobile mental health vans, visiting barbershops, night-clubs, or gyms where Black males frequent to provide and disseminate information. For example, the Marion County Public Health Department deploys a substance use outreach van which provides substance use screenings, HIV testing, counseling, and referral services throughout neighborhoods in Marion County.

The disproportionality of young Black men involved in deaths and murders in Indianapolis is an unfortunate result of their poor quality of life. In virtually every arena that counts – poverty, employment, education, criminal justice, access to health care, and exposure to violence – Black men come out worse in Indianapolis, the state of Indiana and across the nation.

We are on a rescue mission. Prevention efforts, including investment in early childhood education, are necessary to help our disconnected youth, particularly young Black men and boys, along a path to attain higher levels of education and employment without being arrested or having contact with the criminal justice system. But investment in early childhood education is not enough. Rather, we must also invest strategically in best-practice programs that are targeted to comprehensively serve Black males and hold program operators accountable for achieving measurable outcomes. This will involve public buy-in through a collaborative effort of various partnerships and adequate funding. Our hope is that the seriousness of this crisis facing the City and our communities will prevent this report from being caught in the middle of political futility.

This task force recommends that either the City lead this initiative and/or designate an organization with the capacity and expertise to lead and convene a collective group to move this initiative forward with haste. This initiative will die without the work of our entire community, including community leaders, elected and appointed officials, parents, educators, youth leaders and organizers, faith-based leaders and community outreach workers.