

## Health Gaps for Boys and Young Men of Color are Narrowed

# OUTCOME NINE

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### Using This Guide: A Note to Building Healthy Communities Coalition Leaders

#### Purpose

Each of the Building Healthy Communities *Outcome Resource Guides* is intended to provide a deeper understanding of the background and context for each outcome, a sampling of promising practices and strategies that will contribute to achieving each outcome, and additional tools and resources that can help local leaders plan for improving the health of their communities. These guides were written specifically to assist local leaders and planners in the 14 communities participating in the Building Healthy Communities program of The California Endowment.

#### Strategies and Promising Practices

The strategies and practices described in each guide are intended to provide options and spark new ideas for local planners. These lists and examples do not represent all known strategies and policy directions in the field. Rather, they represent an overall direction that, based on the evidence at hand, show promise for contributing to a comprehensive approach to improving health in California communities.

#### Indicators of Success

These indicators are examples of ways to measure changes in this outcome. The appropriate indicator to use as a part of measuring progress, either as a part of an evaluation or a performance monitoring plan, will depend on the targeted changes and strategies that are selected either as part of a place's work plan or part of measuring a grantee's performance.

#### Contributing to the knowledge base

These guides constitute the beginning of a TCE library of resources that will grow over the next 10 years based on the experiences of BHC communities, as well as on emerging evidence for promising policies and practices in the field as a whole. Community residents, local leaders as well as researchers and scholars are invited to add to this foundation as new tools, strategies, experience and evidence emerge. Please contact TCE at [www.calendow.org](http://www.calendow.org).

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### Outcome Nine: Health Gaps for Boys and Young Men of Color are Narrowed

“It is only the generations who come that can be the architects of what will be...”

– HARRY BELAFONTE, INTERVIEW WITH THE HAYWOOD BURNS INSTITUTE

#### I. Background

##### Confronting California’s Future

Even if one embraces the fundamental democratic precept that all human beings are created equal, the often harsh reality of social and economic conditions into which people are born can sadly twist that ideal. The California Endowment is dedicated to addressing this dynamic in California and nationally. It’s an uphill battle, and unfortunately it’s not just one hill. The challenges are numerous and interconnected, historical and structural—from poverty and racism to school failure and community deterioration. These conditions take a particularly devastating toll on low-income communities and communities of color. And by nearly every measure, the Latino and African American boys and young men from these communities are taking the brunt of these conditions.

According to a 2009 RAND Corporation report the sheer *magnitude* of the odds against African American and Latino boys and young men of color is staggering.

- They have dramatically lower high school graduation rates and a far greater likelihood of going to prison.
- They are more than seven times more likely to have someone close to them murdered and for young African-American young men 16 times more likely to be murdered themselves.
- They are also more likely to witness violence: African-American children are three times more likely—and Latino children more than twice as likely—to be exposed to a shooting.
- They are more likely to suffer from post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD), from alcohol or drug abuse, and to engage in criminal activity.
- Of the estimated 3 million children in the California that live in poverty, Latino and African-American boys are 3.4 times more likely to live in poverty.
- Their families are more likely to have the least income and the least opportunity to build assets.
- Their communities are more likely to have the greatest disinvestment, live where poverty is most concentrated.
- And the greatest health disparities – the greatest rates of infant death and the shortest life spans – are disproportionately African American males.

To address these issues there is the need to address two issues simultaneously—the capacity for communities to address their unique local histories of race, and the broader impact race has on communities’ ability to address the consequences of this history. Addressing this will require changes in perspective in order to make the difficult decisions necessary to increase awareness, set expectations, foster accountability and provide relief. Accomplishing this will require supporting the development of “tables” both within communities, as well as across them, for venues that foster new ways of thinking and collaboration.

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TCE's focus on 4 big results and 10 strategic outcomes is designed to create a framework that allows TCE to act on and monitor an array of community conditions that collectively influence the health of whole communities and populations. As this guide consistently will point out, while this outcome—reducing health gaps for boys and young men of color—has been identified as a discrete outcome, its real function is to serve as a key equity indicator to be applied across all outcomes. In short, TCE's work across four targeted systems—health, human services, education, and neighborhoods—will include an analysis and strategy for how those systems can address the racial and gender disparities that exist.

Achieving health equity, which means “getting at” the root causes of the disparities that impact communities of color, requires TCE to be race “conscious” in its analysis of systems and policies. There are four strategic reasons why:

- It will allow both place-level and statewide efforts to set targets for narrowing gaps over the next 10 years.
- At the local level, it permits leaders to translate data directly into targets for closing explicit gaps for boys and men of color (for example—meet enrollment in public coverage target or health assessment target).
- Allows this framework of “eliminating health disparities/health status gaps,” to be used by the places to translate data into new programs, policies, and community strategies that can both be tailored to the community and reduce the disparities and improve results for boys and young men of color.
- It lets a collective evaluation of various approaches emerge that will address the issues facing boys and young men of color. This in turn, allows for the identification of those issues/barriers that communities are collectively facing and targets those at the state level (either state-level or statewide) to pursue a policy agenda that is rooted in the perspective and experiences of the 14 places.

### The Pathway – Boys and Men of Color

While parts of this story above have been told and addressed before, the whole story has rarely been told and has never been addressed. What currently exists is insufficient in scale or depth to engage and support all of the necessary interventions that can close the gaps we know exists. Equally as important, many of those who are positioned to be strong partners and allies are currently working in isolation—without either a common view or language to connect them. This dynamic exists for a number of legitimate reasons:

- Undertaking either policy and/or system reform coupled with the depth of entrenched power interests in key institutions make it difficult to successfully move reform in even one system (e.g. education reform, criminal justice system reform, workforce development reform, health reform); as a result, tackling reform across systems has discouraged most.
- Community leaders, policy advocates, academic researchers and foundations have by in large chosen to put their energies into interventions that attempt to help boys and men of color manage within existing structural arrangements.

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- Policy advocates and community practitioners alike have often chosen to target their talent, energy, and organizational resources toward the goal of helping boys and men of color at specific points of development and/or crisis (e.g. early childhood, school to prison pipeline, trauma)

This lack of consensus on an over-arching framework to connect and unify the diverse set of folks in communities across California needed to successfully craft and implement a prevention agenda for boys and young men of color presents both a significant, but daunting opportunity. To address this opportunity and mitigate these challenges two things are needed:

**A. The Creation of a “Collective View”** – as the health of men and boys of color are critical to realizing a “Building Healthy Communities” agenda, we must recast the goal of improving their life chances as critical not only to the health and success of communities they are a part of, but to the survival and success of California.

**B. Development of a Framework** – This focus must have some common agreement on the following:

- Structures of race, gender and poverty underlie this population's problems.
- Political will must exist for addressing the needs of this population, since they lack the power, voice, and representation to change many of these conditions.
- Successful strategies should build upon existing structures and organizations, increasing their ability to address the needs of the population; and in some cases, new capacities must be built.

### Healthy Communities, Healthy California

The circumstances facing boys and young men of color, their families and their communities are not only morally unacceptable, they weaken communities, and make California's current path unsustainable. By coupling its Building Healthy Communities (BHC) agenda with an explicit equity perspective, it is the intention of The California Endowment to develop an approach that will help move California toward a long-awaited tipping point for change. We know that change is not only *possible*, but *necessary*. Adverse health and well-being outcomes are not like rare cancers where the cause and course of a disease is unknown. We know how to reduce infant mortality, keep a child in school, or help a young man successfully transition into a productive community member. There are model programs across our communities and our state that have demonstrated it can be done and clear policy changes that could begin to close these gaps. Over the next 10 years The California Endowment intends to nurture and guide the movement towards healthy change, in partnership with the 14 BHC communities.

This is California's next great challenge. This can be the starting point for change, our opportunity to turn outrage into action and renewed political will. After all, we cannot build healthy communities if a significant segment of these communities never experience, day in and day out, what we would all consider a healthy environment.

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### II. Overview of Narrowing Health Gaps for Boys and Young Men of Color

This brief maintains that socially constructed racial privilege and gender norms persist as strong predictive factors in determining the health and well-being of communities in America. The purpose of this resource guide is to highlight the health gaps experienced by boys and men of color (BMoC) and offer strategies and examples for counteracting the root causes of disparities. Though this guide spotlights health disparities among males of color, it is essential to emphasize that these gaps affect whole communities. In particular, women – who parent, employ, partner, and otherwise relate to males in family, school, faith, workplace, and other settings – are crucial to the goal of increasing equitable health outcomes for males of color and their communities.

In the main text is an analysis that combines race and gender as a framework for understanding and addressing the health disparities experienced by BMoC. The focus of this guide on males of color obviously calls the matter of race into discussion. Specifically, this guide will examine how race is coded into the DNA of American policies, practices, and systems, particularly health systems. Masculine identity also will be discussed as central to achieving equitable health outcomes. Like race, ideas about masculinity will be examined to help shed light on society's common understandings of manhood and how these beliefs frequently undermine the delivery of quality health care to BMoC, as well as males' willingness to access health care services.

This brief also aims to advance The California Endowment's (TCE's) four-pronged vision for Building Healthy Communities (BHC) where: 1) children have a health home; 2) childhood obesity is in decline; 3) children and youth are safe from violence in their homes and neighborhood; and 4) children regularly attend school. TCE's intention to narrow health gaps for boys and men of color directly and indirectly relates to these four goals and integrates the concerns of men and boys with the interests of broader physical communities and communities of interest. Realizing these aims necessarily includes: shifting health and human services resources toward prevention; supporting local stakeholders engaged in creating these changes; and helping to connect local changes to systems reforms at the state and national level. Highlighted in the guide are strategies that local stakeholders can weigh as they work toward these targets.

The body of this guide is organized into three key parts. Following this background portion, Section II provides an overview of the issues impacting the health of boys and men of color in the context of the systems and policies that impact their daily lives, along with an analysis of race and gender. Section III offers examples of promising interventions, public policies, and system reforms that hold promise for improving health outcomes among BMoC and could be helpful to local leaders. Section IV suggests ways to identify and measure progress in your work to narrow health disparities. The final segment of the guide provides an array of resources in California and around the world that may prove to be useful references in your work.

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In sum, this guide is a tool to aid the work undertaken in your BHC community. Like any tool, it is sometimes the best instrument for the task at hand and at other times it may be ill-fitted, need to be sharpened, or simply just isn't right for the job. Now it is up to you to determine whether and how to use it.

### Context and Crisis

There is much to honor about the strides made by people of color and others as a result of agitation and struggle against formal power – recorded in laws, policies, and systems – and informal power – frequently exercised through practices and discretionary decisions. For most of its history, America's laws, policies, and systems have been tilted to favor those with power derived from their status, money, property, and through brute force. Though the nation has changed, inequity is still hard-wired into its circuitry.

An example of this lingering inequity is the remarkably wide disparities in the life outcomes between males of color and their counterparts. For decades, the health and well-being of males of color residing in low-wealth communities have been in steady decline as is evidenced by a number of key measures. To illustrate the point, an examination of U.S. life expectancy rates by race reveals that for the last *century*, Black males have had the shortest life expectancy of any racial/ethnic group in the country.<sup>1</sup> At 68.8 years, Black male life expectancy trails that of Caucasian males by more than 6 years, and Latino and Native males by 9 years and 4 years, respectively. In fact, U.S. Black male life expectancy is comparable to that of men living in developing countries.<sup>2</sup> Several factors could help explain this gap among today's men, but for this disparity to endure for 100 years without urgent national attention is inexcusably unjust and is owed, at least in part, to America's legacy of unequal power.

Men are also known to eat more unhealthy foods, experience more food-related health concerns, and take less action to seek care or take other measures to correct health issues than women.<sup>3</sup> The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) find that more than half (53%) of men aged 18 to 29 years do not have a regular physician, compared with one third (33%) of peer women without a designated healthcare provider.<sup>4</sup> Research confirms that men and boys are far more likely than women and girls to engage in behaviors that “increase the risk of disease, injury, and death and far less likely to take actions that advance their health and well-being.”<sup>5</sup> A Drexel University report<sup>6</sup> on the role trauma plays on health outcomes of California males of color describes racial differences in young men's contact with violence:

“Boys and men of color are two times more likely than white boys and men to have witnessed domestic violence and to have been exposed to other forms of violence. African-American children and youth are nearly three times as likely to witness a shooting, bombing, or riot. Similarly, Latino children and youth are just over two times more likely to witness a shooting, bombing, or riot than white children and youth. In addition, the odds of an African-American child or youth of having someone close to them murdered are 7.8 times higher than a White child or youth; a Latino child's odds are 7.4 times higher than a White child or youth.”<sup>7</sup>

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Whether the indicator is life expectancy or another significant measure of health and well-being, the evidence is clear: males of color are among the most vulnerable in our society. For decades, scholars and journalists have documented and reported on the so-called crisis among urban males. Frequently, the news stories and academic publications miss a core underlying reality – the so-called urban male crisis is rooted in the near-absolute social, economic, and political marginalization of too many boys and men of color. This is particularly true for those who make a mistake – break a school rule, violate parole, or drive a late-model car in the “wrong” neighborhood. However, as was recently reported in a *New York Times* article on joblessness among college-educated males of color, even playing by the rules is no assurance of a fair game for Black and Latino males.

The situation of urban males of color is as American as mom and apple pie. It is a direct outgrowth of the interplay between formal and informal power, which continues to shape the contours of opportunity and produce inequities. Unevenly distributed opportunity reduces the nation’s productivity and eventually undermines global competitiveness. An urgent challenge before the nation is how best to realize broader achievement for everyone and expand opportunities for traditionally marginalized groups of people.

### Race and Gender: An Interconnected Perspective

Understanding oppression and differences in power relationships can be complex. The analysis offered here borrows from a long tradition of progressive Black feminist theory and progressive masculinities literature, as each have contributed to our understanding of race, gender, class, and power. At the core, this perspective maintains that racial justice or gender equity alone are necessary, but not enough to fully understand and undo the injustices faced by BMoC.

The following paragraphs offer an introduction to the use of this perspective for unpacking and addressing the ways that males of color experience unfair treatment related to being both male and of color. This perspective suggests three principles for advocates to consider in their work to build healthy communities and close health gaps among BMoC:

- 1) Race and gender are interconnected identities that shape the experiences and inform the decisions of males of color.
- 2) Applying a race and gender lens necessarily means being against the dominance of others based on their race, sex, sexuality, class, etc.
- 3) This perspective is rooted in the power of race and gender as a frame for countering injustice and promoting the whole and healthy development of males of color.

Each of these principles is explained in the paragraphs that follow. It is important to note that the ideas shared here are viewed as universal and, therefore, could be applied to other groups of people, though the focus in this guide is on males of color.

### Race and Gender: Interconnected Identities

Low-income Black and Brown males are among the most marginalized in America. Their maleness and racial/ethnic identity are inseparable features of their identity. Being male and of color are undeniable and, for many, are symbols of pride. Yet, being male, of color, and low-income can



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simultaneously jeopardize their safety, freedom, personal dignity, and human rights. For example, the racial profiling that Black and Brown males (and females) that many have lived with and fought against for decades – ‘driving while Black,’ or ‘shopping while Brow’n - is now so commonly recognized that Caucasian standup comedians work it into comedy acts. Even though popular recognition of injustice can shed light and help to curb it; it is also necessary to change the policies and practices which govern the behavior of professionals who would otherwise do their job through the filter of racial stereotypes and gender prejudice.

The vulnerability associated with being male and of color is the polar opposite of the images frequently attached to Latino and Black males. For years, popular culture and mainstream media have fed the world images of young, urban males of color as tough aggressive, fearsome, and violent. Those depictions of males of color betray any sense that males of color need to be protected; rather, it sends the message that the rest of “us” need protection from them. The point is that boys and men exist in an artificial paradox that cuts across class and ethnicity. This contradiction, faced by Latino and Black males alike, is an underlying reason why a prominent African-American professor at an elite university is at once a proud and well-regarded man of color and a criminal suspect who can be arrested on the porch of his home. He could well have been Latino or Native American, and the outcome might have been the same. A role for advocates and practitioners is to continuously rally stakeholders against the use of formal and informal power that places males of color at risk.

### Progressive Manhood: Struggling Against Dominance

The ability for males of color to be both vulnerable under certain circumstances and aggressive in others could be understood as resiliency and adaptability. In other words, some boys and men of color learn to behave in a way consistent with stereotypically tough images to protect their personal safety; and in other situations behave in a non-threatening way to put others at ease. This ability to switch behaviors as appropriate to a setting requires intelligence and social awareness that is easily unnoticed.

The motivation to switch behavior could also be caused by deep-seated insecurity, fear, and distrust. Young men of color are frequently threatened and perceive threats which can lead to displays of false bravado or machismo as way to fend off threat and hide fear. The sense among this group to be the tough one, who *que no se deja* (who doesn't take anything from anyone), is widespread across race, class, and culture. For these males, the very definition of manhood is *que no se raja* (one who doesn't back down) – taking on all challengers and confrontations.

While these attitudes also exist among diverse groups of men, older men and men with more resources and/or options for resolving conflicts will likely do so without becoming violent. Unfortunately, violence is too frequently the only course of action pursued by boys and young men of color who hold these attitudes, believing that they lack those same options. In youth development programs, schools, and community settings, many males of color are repeatedly making decisions about how to act in a given moment. For others, who lack the skill, insight, or desire to adjust their patterns, it is important that adults who understand their options guide them into making good choices.

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It is essential to underscore that though males of color at times endure unjust treatment based on their gender and race, they also benefit from privileges on the same basis. This favorable status can be misused in attempts to dominate women, gay men, and other straight men. The dominant standard of American manhood prioritizes personal traits such as strength, power, coolness, charisma, athleticism, street smarts, physical size, “good looks,” and heterosexuality. Boys and men of color who are perceived as possessing these characteristics can often insulate themselves from being as vulnerable, because peers, and some adults, defer to them or give them a break when they misbehave.

Conversely, within the pecking order of what is viewed as very masculine, males who do not appear to possess any of these traits or have traits opposite of these can be subjected to relentless teasing, verbal abuse, bullying, and even violence. For example, across racial and ethnic groups, many straight males view gay males as inferior and frequently tease, bully, and abuse males they consider or know to be homosexual. Within some Latin cultures, only gay men perceived as feminine or submissive are viewed as weak or inferior by straight men.<sup>8</sup> Similar sexist and homophobic attitudes which link weakness with femininity exist among males across racial/ethnic groups. Obviously, these views are learned and can create oppressive social conditions for gay, bi-sexual, and transgender people. While helping males of color understand and undo the injustices they experience, these views remind us of the need to deliberately empower boys and young men with strategies for effectively struggling against all forms of violence and dominance.

### Countering Injustice and Promoting Healthy Development

The economic, social, political, and cultural marginalization experienced by BMoC is shared by the women and girls of their communities. A number of women in these communities know racial and gender injustice well and are in positions to assist with defining and undoing the inequalities that emerge from unequal power relationships. Non-profit professionals working with BMoC should consider how best to engage women, so males can exchange ideas about gender marginalization and equity from the perspectives of women. Such interactions could also present opportunities for discussing topics such as developing healthy peer relationships, young people’s roles in building healthy communities, and male sexual and reproductive health.

Generations of Latino and Black males are growing up with deep-rooted pain, anger, and resentment of older males. Roughly half of all Latino new births and more than two-thirds of Black infants are born to unmarried parents. Too many of these children never develop a loving relationship with their father. Some experts refer to understandable hurt, which results as father hunger – the natural desire for a child to know and receive unconditional love from its male parent – and suggest professional counseling to help young people understand, express, and eventually heal the wound that is caused from father absence. Organizations and professionals working with BMoC need to be equipped to work on healing emotional and mental hurt that inevitably emerges. Using a race and gender perspective may help boys and young men understand some of the reasons a father is absent and could help young men make decisions that position them to be responsible fathers when they so choose.

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The prior two paragraphs focused on applying the race and gender perspective to promoting health and healing among BMoC. The race and gender filter can also help determine how to measure the achievement of race and gender equity through efforts to reform public policy and practice within systems. For example, in determining the most effective strategies for reducing health gaps for BMoC, this perspective could help identify increasing access to sexual health services as a policy outcome that cuts across race and gender. The first objective of using the race and gender perspective is to deliberately place them both on the table. As efforts to achieve change progress, using this perspective helps maintain accountability to the principles of race and gender equity throughout the change process. This focus is critical because it is possible that either, or both, race and gender equity as principles, could get lost in the pursuit of a policy change or system reform.

### III. Promising Strategies and Practices

The following description of public policies and systemic practices affecting the well-being of males of color is informed by the expertise and observations of local advocates and practitioners. These concerns are not exhaustive and do not uniformly apply to all Latino and African-American males. While differences may be found in local communities, the obstacles described below illustrate the interactions between males of color and public systems all over the country.

More than sixty years of policy-making standards concerning low-income people and communities have been characterized by universal policies fashioned to:

- open educational pathways
- spark housing and economic development in blighted communities
- provide aid to families in need
- connect economically marginalized individuals to jobs
- advance strategies that promote savings and home ownership

These and related policy interventions were, in part, crafted and legislated with the intention of providing low-income people and communities with on-ramps to mainstream society. Indeed, building broad-based public and legislative support for such policy initiatives is premised upon the notion that the benefits will accrue for the collective good. Generally, policy interventions that might directly address the specific disparities faced by boys and men of color, experience far more difficulty gaining legislative sponsorship, momentum, or votes to move out of committee. More often than not, punishment-oriented policy responses such as zero-tolerance policies in schools, gang injunctions on whole communities, or mandatory minimums and three-strikes laws in corrections, represent the policy responses targeting males of color.

For decades, local communities throughout California and across the nation have been hard at work to overturn harsh public policies and practices. Adult and youth advocates have worked tirelessly to offer legislators alternative approaches that support the healthy development of all young people, especially males of color. Though the struggles of community leaders, parents, youth, and other community stakeholders for transformative change have met with mixed results,

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their unwavering commitment to rail against injustice and their collective will to create new realities warrant documentation and examination. In a limited way, this section highlights promising and effective strategies for employing public policy to stimulate and sustain positive community change. The mini-case examples that follow are far from exhaustive, but offer a sampling of systemic and policy change efforts that help improve life outcomes among males of color.

The California Endowment is measuring the progress of its BHC effort against four ambitious goals:

- 1) reduce youth violence
- 2) reverse the childhood obesity epidemic
- 3) provide a health home for all children
- 4) increase school attendance

The Endowment's Building Healthy Communities Initiative is focusing on strategic reform in four systems areas to advance the aforementioned goals. These are: 1) Health, 2) Human Services, 3) Schools, and 4) Neighborhoods. The policy issues discussed below overlap with these goals and include public policy matters that impact TCE's focal systems. For each policy issue, there is also a brief description of opportunities for creating change on that issue, and examples of others making progress in California or elsewhere around the country.

### A. The K-12 Education Pipeline (Schools)

- **Challenges** – Black and Latino males are disproportionately impacted by so-called zero-tolerance policies which carry stiff suspensions and expulsions for students identified as non-compliant. Evidence supports the impressions that Latino and Black male students are more likely to be arrested in school and on a pathway to juvenile detention or county jail, regardless of the composition of the student body.<sup>9</sup> The shortcomings of public school education for males of color are many; however a few should be noted here: a) *Identity Dissonance* – Local experts indicated that males of color seem to be having difficulty reconciling their gender, and their cultural and racial identities, with the culture of public schools; b) *Soft Bigotry of Low Expectations* – Not only are educators' expectations quite low for males of color, but so too are administrators' expectations for teachers responsible for educating boys of color; and c) *Unclear Educational Goals and Strategies* – Aside from athletics for a select few and vocational training programs, "it is not clear to many boys of color what education is preparing them to do in life."<sup>10</sup>
- **Opportunities** – Reauthorization of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) is scheduled to occur in 2010 and despite the many problems with the law, when Congress begins hearings, it is crucial for advocates, parents, and young people to let their positions be known to members of Congress. In the meantime, local stakeholders can regularly engage school district officials and administrators in gathering and analyzing student performance data by race and gender. This may prove particularly challenging in California due to Proposition 209, but it is an important application of the race and

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gender perspective, because it keeps race and gender on the table in the struggle for equitable education outcomes. A second opportunity will surface in 2010 as California prepares its application for the Obama Administration's Race to the Top competition. In order to be awarded grant funds in 2010, the State will need to build partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders. Advocates, parents, and males of color should understand what the State's application proposes and what role they can play to inform the State's efforts, should it receive funding from the \$4.35 billion the U.S. Department of Education has set aside for the competition. For more on Race to the Top, please see <http://www.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/index.html>

- **Examples** – In the city of Oakland, *Californians for Justice* helped pass A-G requirement legislation, mandating that all Oakland high schools provide sufficient college readiness courses to prepare students for admission to UC and California State universities. Both of these higher education systems collaborated to establish standards for high school curricula. As students matriculate high school and pass courses in the A-G curriculum, their access to higher education opportunities would be increased. Several years ago, *Community Coalition*, a Los Angeles-based grassroots organization, won a similar measure to provide A-G courses for students in South Central Los Angeles high schools. Organizations such as CFJ and Community Coalition are delivering outstanding education reform efforts. For more information on the work of these organizations, please visit [http://www.caljustice.org/cfj\\_live/](http://www.caljustice.org/cfj_live/) and <http://www.cocosouthla.org/>

### B. Health System (Health)

- **Challenges** – Males of color residing in low-wealth communities are deficient in both physical and mental health services. The delivery of health services in these communities typically fails to address and overcome social and cultural factors such as health literacy and linguistic appropriateness. Just as important for men of color is the removal of social obstacles that tie seeking health care to vulnerability. It is critical that health care professionals are trained to identify and skillfully engage traditional notions of masculinity that might have undermined the desire of many men to seek and receive health services. Taken together, the structural deficits in the delivery of health services combined with the social and cultural barriers to receiving quality health services must be overcome in order to improve outcomes and reduce risks among males of color and their communities.
- **Opportunities** – In 2006, the federal Office of Minority Health (OMH) gathered 2,000 people for a national summit on racial and ethnic health disparities. The outgrowth of the meeting was the creation of the National Partnership for Action (NPA) to End Health Disparities – a national campaign to connect and mobilize people around the country to support this effort. There is an immediate opportunity to comment on the NPA's national strategies for defining, measuring, and ending health disparities. Through February 12, 2012, you can review and comment on the NPA strategic plan online at <http://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/npa/templates/browse.aspx?lvl=1&lvlID=31>

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Furthermore, individuals and organizations may choose to be directly involved with state and federal public agencies working to end health disparities. NPA participants from California have included the California Office of Multicultural Health, the Asian and Pacific Islander Health Forum, and the Association of Asian Pacific Community Health Organizations. Though not exclusively focused on males of color, the federal OMH and the work of the NPA provide a solid chance to engage issues of health disparities among boys and men of color and advance race and gender equity in closing health gaps. If you would like to learn more about the NPA and become a partner, please visit <http://minorityhealth.hhs.gov/npa/>. In addition, the California OMH continues its Council on Multicultural Health. For more information about the California OMH, please see <http://www.cdph.ca.gov/services/boards/comh/Pages/default.aspx>

- **Examples** – In addition to the organizations noted above, another example is the Young Men's Clinic (YMC), which evolved out of the adolescent family planning program that has been operated by the Center for Population and Family Health at Columbia University in New York City since 1976. The clinic's main focus is addressing the sexual and reproductive health needs of young men – including screening and treatment of STDs, confidential HIV counseling and testing, and condom education and distribution. The clinic has been featured in The New York Times, Scientific American Presents, the American Journal of Public Health, the federal Office of Population Affairs, Perspectives on Sexual and Reproductive Health, CBS Sunday morning news, and MTV. For more information on the Young Men's Clinic, please visit [www.youngmensclinic.org](http://www.youngmensclinic.org)

### C. Violence, Criminal Justice, and Reentry (Human Services)

- **Challenges** – In 1999, Zachary Dowdy of *Crisis* magazine reported that the incarcerated population in U.S. prisons and jails was roughly 500,000 in 1980 – the start of the Reagan Administration. Over the subsequent three decades, the implementation of stricter sentencing guidelines – mandatory minimum sentences, structured sentences, and “truth” in sentencing policies – has nearly eliminated judicial discretion in sentencing; substantially lengthened prison terms; and helped the incarcerated population balloon to over 2.2 million people. Males generally, and males of color specifically, are over-represented among those incarcerated. According to the Bureau of Justice (BJS) Statistics, of the male population, 1 in 18 men and 1 in 11 Black males are currently under some form of criminal justice supervision. While this data point was not available for Latino males, BJS reports that Latino males are twice as likely as White males to be incarcerated. (To read more about these issues, see the Resource Guide for **Outcome Five**, “Children and Their Families Are Safe from Violence in Their Homes and Neighborhoods.”)

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- **Opportunities** – In the face of an historic recession, many policymakers and budget officials understand that their states are unable to sustain spending billions of dollars annually on corrections, parole, and probation. However, no state in the union has responded with a comprehensive reentry policy to aid these individuals with access to quality healthcare and medication, as necessary, stable housing, or secure employment. While several state departments of corrections have reentry initiatives or support the reentry work of community-based, non-profit organizations, these efforts are typically located in larger urban areas and have limited capacity to actually help former prisoners navigate the complexities of securing housing, training opportunities, or employment.
- **Examples** – The W. Haywood Burns Institute (BI) for Juvenile Justice Fairness & Equity is a San Francisco-based national non-profit that uses data and consensus-building processes to ensure fair and equitable treatment of young people by the systems that touch their lives. In its work around the country, the Burns Institute has effectively worked to reduce disproportionate minority confinement (DMC) in the juvenile justice system, and Santa Cruz, California, has been one of the places where the organization has seen the evidence of its intervention. In tandem with government and non-profit stakeholders, parents, and youth, the Burns Institute helped Santa Cruz County create a program that provides an alternative to detention and is reducing the unnecessary detention of young males of color. An alternative-to-detention site in Santa Cruz provides young people with activities that keep them safe, provide homework assistance, help them acquire job search skills and employment, and connect them to caring adults.

Barrios Unidos Institute for Peace and Community Development (BU), a non-profit organization based in Santa Cruz, is a critical local partner in the work with Burns Institute and local stakeholders to reduce racial disparities in the rates of juvenile detention. Since implementing efforts to reduce disproportionate contact and confinement, the population of detained youth has been reduced by more than half in a decade – from an average of more than 50 youth per day in 1996 to 22 in 2005. Furthermore, the county police have reduced juvenile felony arrests by 48%; misdemeanor arrests by 43%; and arrests for serious violent offenses by 46%. The county now uses an objective screening process to only detain high-risk offenders. Working with Barrios Unidos, county officials have implemented systems to filter youth based on objective risk factors, age, and gender, rather than assumptions and stereotypes. Taken together, these measures have led to more equitable treatment of youth and fewer young people behind bars. For more information about the Burns Institute, please visit <http://www.burnsinstitute.org>, and for additional information about Barrios Unidos, log on to <http://www.barriosunidos.net>



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Other promising models include The Mentoring Center – an Oakland-based non-profit organization that provides a direct service mentoring program model designed to transform the lives of the most highly at-risk youth (see <http://www.mentor.org>); and The Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) – a New York City-based intervention model founded on a highly structured program of pre-employment training, short-term paid transitional employment, and full-time job placement and retention services (see <http://www.ceoworks.org>).

The California Corrections Standard Authority is now providing incentive funds to counties that address disparate minority confinement. Thirteen counties in the state have been awarded grants and are working on reducing racial and ethnic disparities. The Corrections Standard Authority has hired a state coordinator and is using Title II funds to incentivize counties to educate staff, gather data on youth of color, engage other partners to help reduce disparities, and implement a plan that will be evaluated. For more information on this important shift in public policy, visit [http://www.cdcr.ca.gov/Divisions\\_Boards/CSA/PPP/Grants/DMC/Index.html](http://www.cdcr.ca.gov/Divisions_Boards/CSA/PPP/Grants/DMC/Index.html)

### D. Immigration

- **Challenges** – In the absence of a national immigration policy, states and localities, particularly those in border regions, have initiated a range of policies and practices in response to undocumented immigration. Outputs of the stricter enforcement efforts include workplace raids, driver's license denial, and increased deportation. According to the Pew Hispanic Center, in 2007, America's immigrant population (documented and undocumented) reached a record of 37.9 million people;<sup>11</sup> roughly one-third of whom have undocumented status.<sup>12</sup> Over 50% of the foreign-born population in the U.S. is Latino and most are Mexican-born.<sup>13</sup> Because some local and state officials are taking immigration policy into their own hands, local jails and state prisons are rapidly filling with Latino males incarcerated while awaiting deportation. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, during a one-year span in 2004-2005, more than 8 in 10 individuals sentenced for immigration offenses were incarcerated;<sup>14</sup> most of these believed to be male. Though data is not readily available on the percentage of the total incarcerated population being held for immigration violations, during 2004-05, more than 16,000 individuals were charged and incarcerated for these offenses.
- **Opportunities** – The future healthcare policy issues involving immigrants are uncertain as the national debate over reforming healthcare continues. This matter is not exclusively about males of color, but is an opportunity to highlight the relevance of immigrant boys and men of color to the healthcare debate. Furthermore, the debate provides an opportunity to highlight concerns about the fair treatment of immigrant workers, particularly those covered under employer-sponsored healthcare plans.



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- **Examples** – Resources on this policy area include the following statewide policy organizations: the Los Angeles-based National Immigration Law Center (<http://www.nilc.org>) and the California Immigrant Policy Center (<http://www.caimmigrant.org/>)

### E. Economic Security

- **Challenges** – The current weakened state of the U.S. economy makes improving employment and economic security among males of color more challenging than usual. An April 2009 *Newsweek* article reported what many people across the nation understood instinctively – the recession is disparately impacting substantial segments of the American population.<sup>15</sup> At the time of President Obama's inauguration, unemployment among Latino and Black males was 11% and 16%, respectively. In November 2009, the *Washington Post* reported that 34.5% of young Black males, aged 16-24, were jobless – a rate more than three times the national unemployment level of 10% percent.<sup>16</sup> In California during that month, unemployment rates topped 15% among Latino males and 17% among Black males. Though educated males of color are faring better than lesser-educated young men, they remain unemployed at rates nearly twice that of college-educated Caucasian males, according to the *New York Times*.<sup>17</sup> Increasing employment among these males should be a priority of federal and state policymakers in their efforts to get the economy moving and increasing national productivity. Given the very high rates of unemployment among males of color, increasing employment among this population could have a large positive impact on lowering the national rate of unemployment. While a vital starting point, improving employment and wages for these males is necessary but not enough. There is a strategic opportunity to integrate savings and asset-building interventions with workforce development for lesser-skilled males. These opportunities should be taken up during the 2010 reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). (To read more about workforce development, please see the Resource Guide for **Outcome Eight**, “Community Health Improvements are Linked to Economic Development.”)
- **Opportunities** – Initial congressional hearings on reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act started in 2009. TCEs outcome of linking community health to economic development can be of vital importance to the WIA reauthorization process. Doing so requires that advocates directly engage their local workforce investment board (WIB) to offer strategic ideas for leveraging WIA funds and the reauthorization process to support healthcare-related and other high-growth-sector job training and career opportunities. Since the California Labor and Workforce Development Agency is already investing funds in nursing and the allied health fields, pushing your local WIB to offer training opportunities to males of color makes sense. A daunting challenge is that there is insufficient funding for these important workforce development initiatives – \$60 million over five years for nursing and \$32 million over three years for allied health fields – to meet the

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demands of employers and the potential supply of workers. Stakeholders in your community should also encourage state representatives to increase the state's commitment of funds to support training for new entrants to the labor market – immigrants, youth, and the previously unemployed – as well as individuals who have been displaced from the labor market.

- **Examples** – The Latino Coalition for a Healthy California (LCHC) continues its policy advocacy work to increase the diversity of California's healthcare workforce. For more information on their efforts, please visit <http://www.lchc.org/>. PolicyLink is also working with partners to expand workforce training capacity in community colleges throughout the state to as a strategy for linking lesser-skilled workers to training and employment opportunities in the infrastructure, green jobs, and other high-growth sectors. For more on PolicyLink's work, please see the organization's Community Colleges and Workforce page at <http://www.policylink.org>. Though not explicitly focused on males of color, the work of LCHC and PolicyLink can have broad impact on improving workforce and economic development opportunities for people of color. Within the state's training and workforce development opportunities, advocates can press for assurances that Black and Latino males are being engaged and benefitting from these opportunities. Also, you can see the innovative intervention models at Homeboy Industries, including its efforts in Los Angeles with young men of color (<http://www.homeboy-industries.org/>); and STRIVE, an effective national employment model with affiliates in San Francisco and San Diego (<http://www.strivenational.org/>)

### Conclusion

Poor community health is intertwined with the function of related systems that govern daily life in communities and the quality of public resources such as schools, health clinics, transportation systems, law enforcement, and housing. It is widely documented in media, academia, and public discourse that public education is struggling to fulfill the primary role of providing a high-quality education to all students, not to mention the more expanded role of keeping students safe or meeting their broader developmental needs. The brunt of these shortcomings is disproportionately shouldered by Latino and Black students, particularly males. A challenge facing nearly every state in the nation is to improve academic achievement among males of color and, thereby, enhance their life chances, health, and well-being. These policy concerns represent opportunities for advocates, organizers, program implementers, and other vested individuals to advance a community stakeholder engagement process that simultaneously seeks reform, and in some instances, overhaul, of public policies and practices, while working to identify and meet the needs of Black and Latino males.

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### IV. Measures of Progress

**Figure 1** outlines some of the measures of progress that could be used by TCE to measure **Outcome Nine**, “Building Healthy Communities – Health Gaps for Boys and Men of Color are Narrowed.”

The appropriate indicator to use as a part of measuring progress in a locally based program, either as a part of an evaluation or a performance monitoring plan, will depend on the targeted changes and strategies that are selected either as part of a place’s work plan or part of measuring a grantee’s performance.

#### FIGURE 1 Measures of Progress

- Local health and human services are tailored to effectively meet the needs of boys and young men of color.
- Schools achieve educational equity and support equal educational opportunities and achievements for all, especially for boys and young men of color.
- Local communities have accessible and meaningful employment, career advancement, and economic opportunities for young men of color.
- Juvenile justice systems (police and sheriff’s departments, probation departments, juvenile courts, etc.) use diversion, probation, and other culturally competent community alternatives to arrest and incarceration.
- All youth released from custodial systems (e.g., juvenile justice, foster care, and community/continuation schools) are provided with support to re-enroll in school, access health care, develop skills, and avoid negative pressures.
- Local youth centers, family resource centers, and other community organizations offer positive youth development programs for boys and young men of color.

### V. Additional Resources

**Latino Coalition for a Healthy California (LCHC)** – LCHC is a statewide advocacy organization that uses information, policy development, and community involvement to promote Latino health. The organization is currently conducting public education and advocacy to support efforts to increase the diversity and cultural competence of California’s health professionals. A primary example of LCHC’s work is the organization’s advocacy in support of Assembly Bill (AB) 1310 which, if passed, would mandate health licensing boards to gather and submit demographic data on licensed health professionals to the Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development. <http://www.lchc.org>

**Policy Link** – This national research and action institute advances economic and social equity under the slogan “Lifting Up What Works.” It works in specific places (among them, California, Louisiana, Newark, and Philadelphia), and uses an array of tools for community change (e.g., research, convenings, best practices, and an equitable development tool kit). Policy Link has been working with public, philanthropic, and non-profit institutions in Oakland to craft strategies, address issues, and mobilize resources to improve the life outcomes of males of color in the San Francisco Bay Area. <http://www.policylink.org>

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**Californians for Justice (CFJ)** – CFJ is a statewide grassroots organization working for racial justice on issues that impact the social, economic, and political power of marginalized groups of people. In the city of Oakland, CFJ helped pass A-G requirement legislation requiring all Oakland high schools to provide sufficient college readiness courses to prepare students for admission to UC and California State universities. [http://www.caljustice.org/cfj\\_live/](http://www.caljustice.org/cfj_live/)

**The National Black Programming Consortium's Masculinity Project** – The American Black male character is often the product of a popular culture image without true context. The Masculinity Project uses media to create a virtual community record of the true issues affecting Black men and the Black community in America. Justice in America, as it relates to Black men, can be explored in many arenas: educational justice, criminal justice, media justice, and many others. How does Black masculinity interact with various definitions of justice in America? How are all citizens invested in the ultimate fulfillment of this justice? <http://www.Blackpublicmedia.org/project/masculinity>

**Fresno West Coalition for Economic Development (FWCED)** – FWCED's overall mission and goal is to improve the physical and socioeconomic conditions of the Southwest area of Fresno and its residents. The organization is also working to identify and strengthen effective strategies that focus on supporting the health of boys and men of color in the metropolitan area of Fresno. <http://www.fwced.com>

**Equal Justice Initiative (EJI)** – This private, non-profit organization in Alabama provides legal representation to indigent defendants and prisoners who have been denied fair and just treatment in the legal system. EJI litigates on behalf of condemned prisoners, juvenile offenders, people wrongly convicted or charged with violent crimes, poor people denied effective representation, and others whose trials are marked by racial bias or prosecutorial misconduct. The organization works with communities that have been marginalized by poverty and discouraged by unequal treatment. EJI is committed to challenging racially discriminatory policies, sentencing, and tactics that have made mass imprisonment a crisis in many communities of color. It considers indigent defense reform and legal assistance to the poor as vital to alleviating the problems caused by unfair criminal justice policies. One of the statistics that guides EJI's work is that Black men are eight times as likely to be incarcerated as White men. <http://www.eji.org>

**California Teachers Association (CTA)** – CTA is California's largest professional employee organization, representing more than 340,000 public school teachers, counselors, psychologists, librarians, other non-supervisory certificated personnel, and Education Support Professionals. CTA is identifying the connections between academic achievement, retention, attendance, and health outcomes for the African-American and Latino student population in Los Angeles and Alameda counties. [www.cta.org](http://www.cta.org)

**Chief Justice Earl Warren Institute on Race, Ethnicity and Diversity at The University of California, Berkeley** – The Chief Justice Warren Institute on Race, Ethnicity and Diversity (Warren Institute) is a multidisciplinary, collaborative venture committed to producing research, research-based policy prescriptions, and curricular innovation on issues of racial and ethnic justice in

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California and across the nation. The Warren Institute's mission is to engage the most difficult topics related to civil rights, race, and ethnicity in a wide range of legal and public policy subject areas, providing valuable intellectual capital to public and private sector leaders, the media, and the general public, while advancing scholarly understanding. The Warren Institute is also producing a series of commissioned studies that will provide a new research-based policy framework for increased attention to the needs of men and boys of color. <http://www.law.berkeley.edu/ewi.htm>

**Film: "HIP-HOP: Beyond Beats and Rhymes"** – This film is a riveting documentary that tackles issues of masculinity, sexism, violence, and homophobia in today's hip-hop culture. The film includes interviews with famous rappers, academicians, public intellectuals, and students from Spelman College. <http://www.pbs.org/independentlens/hiphop/>

**The 2025 Campaign for Black Men and Boys** – The mission of the Twenty-First Century Foundation (21CF) is to facilitate strategic giving for Black community change. Specifically, 21CF works with donors to invest in institutions and leaders that solve problems within Black communities nationally. In November 2005, the Twenty-First Century Foundation, the National Urban League, Public/Private Ventures, and the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund came together to host a national conversation of scholars, practitioners, and advocates focusing on issues that affect Black men and boys. The name of the campaign is derived from its goal to improve the lives of Black males, so that a Black male child born in 2007 will have significantly improved life outcomes by the time he turns 18 – in the year 2025. <http://2025bmb.org/index2.php>

**Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies** – The Joint Center, a national public policy institute conducting research on issues affecting African-Americans, established the Dellums Commission in 2005 to analyze the physical, social, and emotional health of young men of color and their communities and to develop an action plan to alter the public policies that limit the life paths of these young men. Oakland Mayor Ron Dellums chaired the commission, which consisted of 25 members, including academics, elected officials, and practitioners, who were asked to prepare background papers on specific issues. The commission ultimately released 11 reports in 2006 on the following topics affecting young men of color: the child welfare system; juvenile justice system; prison industrial complex; juveniles' transfer to adult court; media images and messages; community health strategies; health needs of youth in the juvenile justice system; public education; higher education; indigenous men; and higher education. <http://www.jointcenter.org>

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