City of Seattle

Office of City Auditor

March 22, 2013

TO: City Councilmember Bruce Harrell, Chair, Public Safety, Civil Rights, and Technology Committee
City Councilmember Mike O'Brien, Vice Chair, Public Safety, Civil Rights, and Technology Committee
City Councilmember Nick Licata, Member, Public Safety, Civil Rights, and Technology Committee
City Councilmember Sally Bagshaw, Alternate, Public Safety, Civil Rights, and Technology Committee

CC: City Council President Sally J. Clark, City Councilmember Tim Burgess, City Councilmember Richard Conlin, City Councilmember Jean Godden, City Councilmember Tom Rasmussen
Donnie Grabowski, Mariko Lockhart, Sid Sidorowicz, Holly Miller, Department of Neighborhoods
Carl Marquardt, Mayor's Office
Karl Stickel, City Budget Office

FROM: David G. Jones, City Auditor

RE: Update of our Review of the Seattle Youth Violence Prevention Initiative (SYVPI) Logic Model

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As you requested, this memo serves as an update of our review of the latest version (i.e., March 14) of the Seattle Youth Violence Prevention Initiative's (SYVPI) logic model. It also communicates our request to the City Council that it approve the implementation of the SYVPI evaluation strategy, which we proposed in our January 31, 2013 memo to the City Council.

Physical Location: Seattle Municipal Tower, Suite 2410, 700 Fifth Avenue, 98104
Mailing Address: Seattle Office of City Auditor, PO Box 94729, Seattle, WA 98124-47729
Tel: (206) 233-3801, Fax: (206) 684-0900 www.cityofseattle.gov/audit

Since receiving the newest version of the SYVPI logic model, our office has had useful discussions with SYVPI officials and with Dr. Todd Herrenkohl from the School of Social Work at the University of Washington, who has been providing volunteer consulting to SYVPI. After holding these discussions and reviewing the new logic model, we believe that the questions and issues that we raised in our January 31 memo about the SYVPI logic model still remain to be answered. For example, we have questions about whether there is a clear linkage between the seven SYVPI strategies and its two long-term outcomes measures (i.e., 50% reductions in referrals to Juvenile Court and middle school suspensions and expulsions). However, our discussions with SYVPI officials and Dr. Herrenkohl led us to the following agreements:

- **"Phase One" of the Evaluation:** The evaluation "readiness review" proposed in our January 31, 2013 memo to the City Council represents the first steps that a skilled evaluator would take in conducting an evaluation. We all agreed that it will be important to proceed with these steps, including responding to the 13 questions raised in our memo, and to check-in with the City Council about the implications of the readiness review. We recognized that the use of the term readiness review may have created some confusion. Therefore, to help clear up any confusion, we agreed that these first steps could be called "Phase One" of the evaluation.

- **Logic Model:** We presented a logic model in our January 31 memo, and subsequently SYVPI has been developing a logic model using an alternative format. SYVPI presented a version of their logic model at the March 6, 2013 meeting of the Council's Public Safety, Civil Rights, and Technology Committee. Subsequently, they revised this logic model, and we discussed it during our March 14 meeting. We all agreed that this logic model could be used as a starting point for "Phase One" of the evaluation, which will include an examination of the 13 questions raised in our memo.

We hope that this clears up any questions about the SYVPI logic model and our proposed evaluation strategy. We are looking for your approval to begin work on "Phase One" of the evaluation and the evaluations of the Street Outreach and School Emphasis Officer components. We anticipate that selecting evaluators could take approximately three months, and we could begin the evaluation work at that time.

City of Seattle

Office of City Auditor

January 31, 2013

TO: City Councilmember Bruce Harrell, Chair, Public Safety, Civil Rights, and Technology Committee
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City Councilmember Nick Licata, Member, Public Safety, Civil Rights, and Technology Committee
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Donnie Grabowski, Mariko Lockhart, Holly Miller, Department of Neighborhoods
Carl Marquardt, Mayor's Office
Karl Stickel, City Budget Office

FROM: David G. Jones, City Auditor

RE: Logic Model and Evaluation Strategy for the Seattle Youth Violence Prevention Initiative (SYVPI)

This memo serves as our response to the City Council's 2013-2014 green sheet request that **"The City Auditor will develop a Logic Model as the first step in the development of an evaluation strategy…The Evaluation Strategy should include an evaluation of the overall initiative and at least two of the current SYVPI program areas, with estimated costs and timeline to conduct these evaluations. It should also include a recommendation on whether to continue with the comparison city evaluation SYVPI staff was working on with the UCLA School of Public Health."** We would be happy to discuss this document with you.

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Summary: The City of Seattle started SYVPI in 2009 to respond to the violent deaths of five youths. The City Council requested that we create a logic model for SYVPI to show its underlying theory and assumptions; a logic model was not created during the original SYVPI planning process. Specifically, the Council wanted to know whether SYVPI's definition of the main problem it should address was clearly and logically linked to both SYVPI's strategies and the outcome measures that are being used to determine its effect on the problem.

After we created a logic model for SYVPI, it raised a number of questions, which are listed below, about the feasibility of conducting an overall evaluation of SYVPI at this time. Our logic model could not explain the linkages between the major problem SYVPI is seeking to address, the strategies, and the outcomes measures, which are to reduce 1) juvenile court referrals and 2) middle school suspensions and expulsions. Furthermore, we learned that due to the expedited planning process resulting from the City's desire to respond quickly to the five youth homicides, SYVPI was based on a limited assessment that incorporated community input but examined and compiled data on only a few indicators of the youth violence problem.

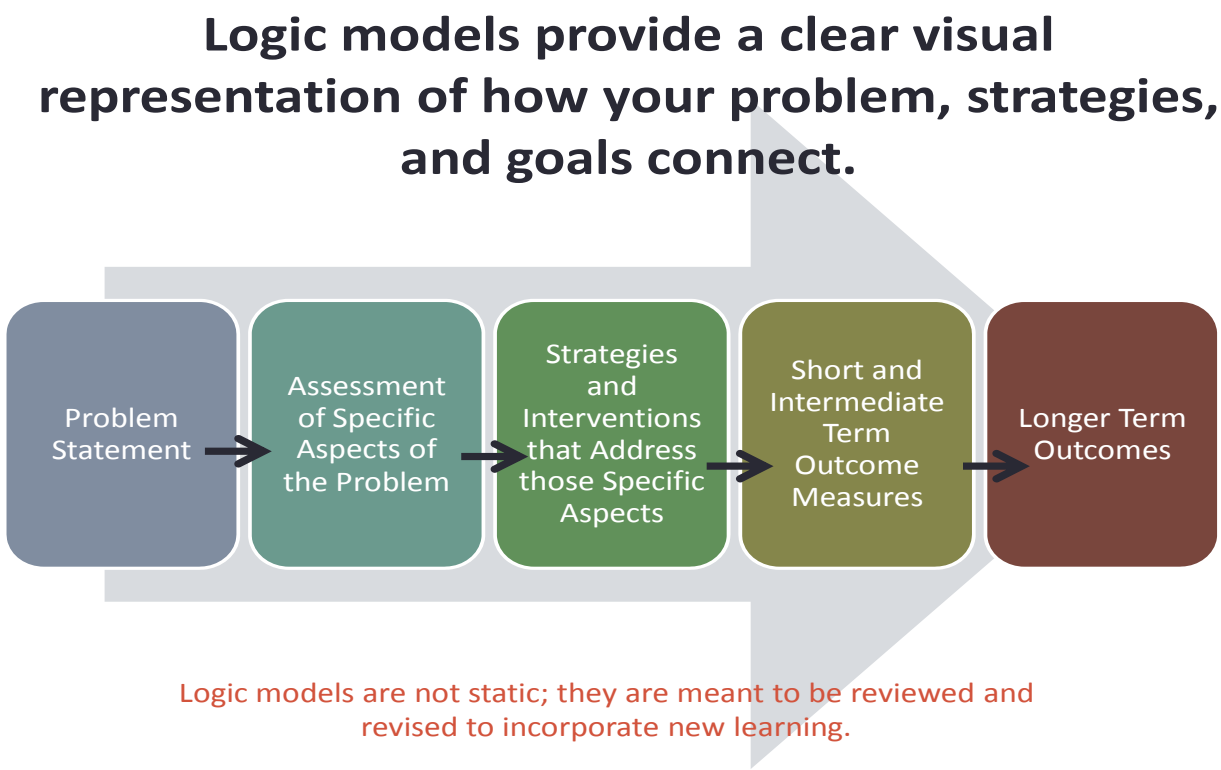
Therefore, as the next step in the evaluation process, we propose to engage a research partner to conduct an Evaluation-Readiness Review[1] that would address the questions we have identified below. An Evaluation-Readiness Review could also help clarify program goals and assess implementation issues (e.g., how are service providers documenting their activities?). In addition, we determined that in 2013 we can engage research partners to conduct stand-alone reviews of two components of SYVPI: 1) street outreach and 2) school emphasis officers. This work could occur at the same time as the Evaluation-Readiness Review. We do not recommend continuing with the comparison city evaluation at this time.

An effective evaluation effort should result in a stronger and more accountable SYVPI. Operational since 2009, SYVPI is well positioned to grow stronger as a result of such an evaluation effort.

[1] An evaluation readiness review, also called an evaluability assessment is "a systematic process used to determine the feasibility of a program evaluation. It also helps determine whether conducting a program evaluation will provide useful information that will help improve the management of a program and its overall performance." From Bureau of Justice Assistance Center for Program Evaluation and Performance Measurement https://www.bja.gov/evaluation/guide/pe1.htm

Methodology: While developing the logic model[2] and the 2013 evaluation strategy, our office reviewed logic models (See Table 1 for the logic model framework), community assessments, evaluation plans, and evaluations from over 20 public safety, violence prevention, and public health initiatives. We applied for and received free technical assistance from two offices within the U.S. Department of Justice: the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, (provided through the National Gang Center) and the Bureau of Justice Assistance's Center for Program Evaluation and Performance Measurement. Our federal technical assistance providers reviewed and commented on our draft documents and provided resource materials and examples of best practices. We reviewed the data and program materials from when SYVPI was implemented as well as current SYVPI program materials including 2013 budget responses, provider contracts, and memoranda of understanding with the Police, Parks, and Human Services departments. We met with SYVPI staff to review and discuss the logic model and evaluation strategy. We also met with officials from Tacoma and King County to learn about their recent youth violence prevention efforts.

Table 1



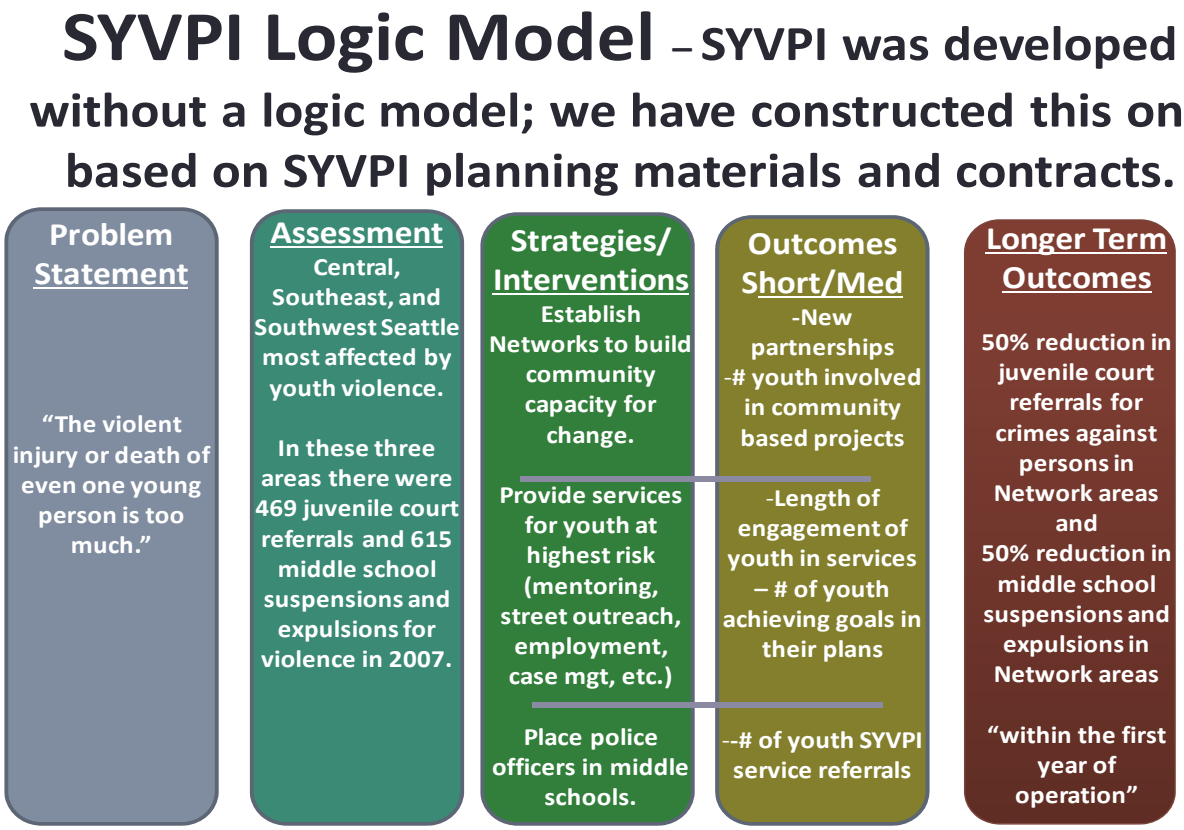
[2] "A logic model is a picture of how your program works – the theory and assumptions underlying the program. A program logic model links outcomes (both short- and long-term) with program activities/processes and the theoretical assumptions/principles of the program. This model provides a roadmap of your program, highlighting how it is expected to work, what activities are needed to come before others, and how desired outcomes are achieved." From W.K. Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Handbook http://www.wkkf.org/knowledge-center/resources/2010/w-k-kellogg-foundation-evaluation-handbook.aspx

Introduction: Effective evaluation is an ongoing process that helps decision-makers better understand a project and how it is affecting participants and the community. Effective evaluation provides a framework for systematically collecting information that strengthens a project during its life cycle and assesses the project's outcomes. Evaluation should not be conducted simply to *prove* that a project worked, but also to *improve* the way it works. Effective evaluation should result in a stronger and more accountable project.

SYVPI is well-positioned to grow stronger as a result of an evaluation effort. Operational since 2009, SYVPI now has three established Neighborhood Networks in Southeast, Southwest, and Central Seattle that serve youth close to where they live and build on the strengths of existing community-based organizations. We have met with SYVPI and Network staff and are impressed with their willingness to engage in evaluation as an opportunity for continuous quality improvement and as a means to improve outcomes for Seattle youth.

Logic Model Questions: A logic model was not created at the time that SYVPI was developed in 2008. We created a proxy logic model for SYVPI based on original and current program documents. A high-level visual depiction of the model can be found below in Table 2. A logic model should include a problem statement, an assessment of the causes of the problem, strategies/interventions to address the causes, short/medium term outcomes, and longer term outcomes expected as a result of the interventions.

Table 2



This proxy logic model raises some questions about the feasibility of evaluating SYVPI's overall effectiveness at this time. Determining whether a program is ready for evaluation before beginning the evaluation effort can help ensure that evaluation resources are used effectively and that the evaluation can provide meaningful results. Below we pose some questions about whether SYVPI is ready for an evaluation of the overall initiative.

- **Assessment:** SYVPI was designed based on an assessment that looked at several indicators of the youth violence problem as well as information gathered through a neighborhood-based, community-led input process. However, due to the expedited nature of the planning process

prompted by the City's desire to respond as quickly as possible to the homicides of five youths, some important youth violence indicators were not incorporated into SYVPI's initial planning process.

As part of our methodology, we reviewed community assessments of youth and gang violence conducted by a number of other cities including Tacoma[3], WA; Houston, TX; and Pittsburgh, PA. These detailed assessments include data about the specific nature of violent crimes in the community over time, including trends in crimes related to gangs and drugs, concentrations of crime at place, and offender demographics. They include data from schools including school performance data and student survey data about violence, perception of safety, and attachment to school and community. The assessments also inventory the existing resources available in the community to address youth violence and identify gaps in services. These detailed assessments allowed the cities to tailor their strategies to the specific issues within the community. Also, the assessment data offered multiple baselines for tracking the progress of their efforts in the short and longer term.

Questions about SYVPI's Evaluation-Readiness:
1. Does SYVPI's original assessment provide enough information to provide a thorough understanding of the youth violence problem in the three Network areas? 2. Does SYVPI's original assessment provide enough baseline indicators for evaluation? Are these appropriate baseline indicators for evaluation? 3. What data does SYVPI regularly collect about the youth violence problem that could be helpful for an evaluation?

- **Strategies:** We have questions about whether two of the three SYVPI strategies are appropriately linked to SYVPI's longer-term outcome measures. SYVPI was originally charged with two outcomes in the three SYVPI neighborhood Network areas "within the first year of operation": 1) a 50% reduction in juvenile court referrals for crimes against persons, and 2) a 50% reduction in middle school suspensions and expulsions.

    - Based on our review of research literature, it appears that the first strategy, Providing Services for Highest Risk Youth, has the potential to positively affect individual high risk

[3] Tacoma's assessment as well as several examples from other jurisdictions can be found at http://www.cityoftacoma.org/Page.aspx?hid=15843

youth. However, we have questions about whether it will show a measurable change for juvenile court referrals or middle school suspensions/expulsions because of possible limitations of the outcome measures. For example, a 16-year old youth who starts receiving SYVPI services is 18 after two years, and then is no longer captured in the SYVPI outcome measurement of juvenile court referrals among 12-17 year-olds.

- For the second strategy, Placing Police Officers in Middle Schools, we could find no research evidence that suggests that this strategy might result in a reduction in court referrals or suspensions/expulsions. Also, there is some research that suggests that this strategy might increase youth exposure to the juvenile justice system. It should be noted that although the Seattle Police Department has been thoughtful in the development of their School Emphasis Officer program, this program has not been evaluated.

- Research evidence indicates that the third SYVPI strategy, Building Community Capacity for Change, could potentially result in a positive change in these outcomes – but over the long term, potentially ten or more years.

Questions about SYVPI's Evaluation-Readiness:
4. What underlying research or theories were considered in the development of SYVPI? 5. Would the SYVPI strategies have a cumulative effect, and how would this be measured? 6. Are the strategies and the outcome measures using the same unit of analysis – are they comparing "apples to apples"? If not, what are the implications for evaluation?

- **Short and Intermediate Term Outcome Measures:** We have questions about whether SYVPI's short term and intermediate term outcome measures are sufficient and whether SYVPI might benefit from improved and additional short term and intermediate outcome measures. For example, data that is already collected by the State of Washington, which includes the Healthy Youth Survey, and data from the new SYVPI risk assessment tool might be used to help determine whether the strategies are serving those youth who are most at risk and whether they are serving them effectively.

Questions about SYVPI's Evaluation-Readiness:

7. What data does SYVPI collect to ensure that it is focused on the highest risk youth? What data does SYVPI collect to track the outcomes for these youth over time?
8. Are the data that SYVPI regularly collects for short and intermediate term outcomes complete and reliable?
9. Is SYVPI tracking any short and intermediate term outcome measures in addition to those listed in our proxy logic model? Do the short and intermediate outcomes measures that SYVPI is tracking provide the best information about whether the strategies are on track?
10. Are there additional data that SYVPI could be using to track short and intermediate term outcomes (e.g. additional police data, Healthy Youth Survey, etc.)?

- **Longer Term Outcome Measures:** We have questions about the appropriateness of SYVPI's longer term outcomes measures.
    - The targets of 50% reductions in juvenile court referrals and suspensions/expulsions within the first year may not have been realistic and have not been achieved. SYVPI later set an annual goal of a 10% reduction in these indicators.
    - Suspensions/expulsions may be problematic as an outcome measure for SYVPI because their use can vary greatly from school to school, they are dependent on school and district policy, and taken alone they are not a direct indicator of violence.

Questions about SYVPI's Evaluation-Readiness:

11. What targets and timeframes for juvenile court referrals and suspensions/expulsions might be appropriate for SYVPI given the complexity of the youth violence issue?
12. Are juvenile court referrals and suspensions/expulsions appropriate longer term outcome measures for SYVPI? Are there different or additional longer term outcomes measures that could be useful indicators of SYVPI's overall effectiveness?
13. Is the proxy logic model an accurate depiction of the program logic underlying SYVPI? If not, what have we missed? If the proxy model is accurate, is the program logic sound?

2013 Evaluation Strategy: A program's logic model should provide the basis for a comprehensive evaluation strategy. Our questions noted above cause us to question the feasibility of an evaluation of the effectiveness of the overall initiative at this point in time. Therefore, as the next step in the evaluation process, we propose to engage a research partner to conduct an Evaluation-Readiness Review that would address the questions that we have identified regarding the design and measurement of SYVPI to determine whether evaluation of the overall initiative is feasible at this time. We do not propose continuing the comparison city evaluation originally proposed by UCLA.[4]

An Evaluation-Readiness Review, also known as an Evaluability Assessment, is a systematic process that identifies whether the evaluation of a program is justified, feasible, and likely to provide useful information.

The U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention published a guide for determining the evaluation readiness of juvenile justice programs. http://www.jrsa.org/pubs/juv-justice/evaluability-assessment.pdf It states that "Unfortunately it is not uncommon for an evaluator to discover after an evaluation is underway that the program is not ready for it. A program may not be fully operational, for example, or may not be able to handle the data collection requirements of an evaluation. Determining whether a program is ready for an evaluation prior to beginning it can help ensure that precious evaluation resources are used at the most appropriate time." The guide describes the important questions to address to determine evaluation-readiness, identifies specific tasks required, and offers examples from juvenile justice programs. An Evaluation-Readiness Review could also help clarify program goals and assess implementation issues (e.g., is sufficient data being collected to measure outcomes?).

In addition, for 2013, if there was interest from the City Council, we believe that we could begin stand-alone evaluations of two SYVPI components: street outreach and school emphasis officers. These evaluations would review how these components have been implemented and would examine the short and intermediate term outcome measures for each[5]. Together, the Evaluation Readiness Review and the implementation evaluations of two SYVPI program components will begin to provide program staff and City decision-makers with information about areas within SYVPI that are working well and areas that might be improved. Table 3 below shows our proposed 2013 evaluation strategy.

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4 The reasons for not continuing the comparison city evaluation originally proposed by UCLA include: UCLA lost its funding for this research, and Tacoma has begun to implement a gang reduction effort and can no longer be used as a comparison city.

[5] Implementation evaluation examines the core activities undertaken to achieve program goals and intended outcomes. [From W.K. Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Handbook. http://www.wkkf.org/knowledge-center/resources/2010/2-k-kellogg-foundation-evaluation-handbook.aspx].

Table 3

SVYPI 2013 Proposed Evaluation Strategy

	What	Who	Timing	Estimated Budget
Overall Initiative	**1. Evaluation Readiness Review**	City Auditor and Research Partner	6-9 months from contract	$125,000
Components	**2. Street Outreach**	City Auditor and Research Partner plus technical assistance from National Gang Center	9-12 months from contract	$75,000
Components	**3. School Emphasis Officers**	City Auditor and Research Partner	9-12 months from contract	$100,000

We propose to hire and manage research partners for the three proposed 2013 evaluation strategy components. Also, for each of the three evaluation components, we plan to use the federal government's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Framework for Program Evaluation in Public Health. In use since 1999, CDC's research-based framework provides a systematic way to approach evaluation using a set of 6 steps and 30 standards. **http://www.cdc.gov/eval/framework/index.htm** In addition, we will conduct the Evaluation Readiness Review in accordance with the Government Auditing Standards issued by the Comptroller General of the United States.

SYVPI Evaluation Beyond 2013: Effective evaluation is an ongoing process that can strengthen a project throughout its life cycle. We anticipate that we could complete the SYVPI Evaluation-Readiness Review in six to nine months from the time that we sign a contract with our selected research partner. If it is determined that SYVPI is ready for an evaluation of the overall initiative, planning for that evaluation could begin immediately thereafter. In addition to the evaluation of the overall initiative, it may be helpful for the City to continue to evaluate the individual components of SYVPI as we have proposed in our 2013 evaluation strategy. In 2013, we propose to begin evaluations of SYVPI's Street Outreach and School Emphasis Officer components. Future year evaluations could focus on the other components of SYVPI including: Case Management, Mentoring, Power of Place, Aggression Replacement Therapy, Youth Employment, etc.