



RESEARCH REPORT

An Interim Process and Outcome Evaluation of Oakland's Measure Z-Funded Services

The Department of Violence Prevention's School Violence Intervention and Prevention Strategy, July 2022 to June 2024

Jesse Jannetta
URBAN INSTITUTE

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Sam Tecotzky
URBAN INSTITUTE

Ashlin Oglesby-Neal
URBAN INSTITUTE

Maya Salcido White
URBAN STRATEGIES COUNCIL



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Executive Summary

This interim evaluation report presents descriptive, process and outcome findings regarding the Oakland Department of Violence Prevention's (DVP's) school violence intervention and prevention (VIP) teams. School VIP teams consist of three individuals—one life coach, one violence interrupter, and one gender-based-violence specialist—and operate in seven high schools in the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD).

Community healing interventions are also available at two of the school sites to support the violence intervention and prevention work. While still in its early implementation stage, the school VIP program shows promise in its work to meet the safety and security needs of Oakland high school students.

Findings

Drawing on staff interviews and analyses of school VIP activities, this report documents a high rate of life-goal completion, increases in students' knowledge of how they can access help, student engagement with school VIP resources, and strong collaborative relationships between school VIP program partners.

Descriptive Analysis

From the inception of the VIP program during the 2022–23 school year through the 2023–24 school year, 544 students received at least one recorded school VIP service, with 255 participating in gender-based-violence services and 196 in life coaching. Students participating in life coaching met over 47 percent of the goals they set. The most common goal types were related to education (43 percent completed) and family (85 percent completed). School VIP teams also referred young people to an array of external services, most commonly employment, education, and financial services.

School VIP teams hosted more than 300 support groups and workshops and 45 trainings. The community healing partner held 69 community-building/restorative events with an average attendance of 40 people. Lastly, violence interrupters recorded 681 violence mediations during the observation period, 57 percent of them categorized as proactive.

Process Evaluation

Providers we interviewed believed that whether school VIP teams succeeded depended largely on the extent to which VIP team members were able to collaborate with each other and with school personnel and the DVP. Among the greatest early implementation successes they described were establishing that collaboration and developing open, trusting relationships with students and their families. They also noted more specific accomplishments, such as students getting paid internships, improving their grades, joining sports teams, getting discharged from probation supervision early, and graduating from high school. Among the challenges school VIP team members described were addressing the degree of trauma exposure among students; constraints on time and resources, which could feel insufficient relative to the level of need in the schools where they worked; and establishing an understanding among school staff regarding the school VIP team members' roles.

Outcome Analysis

We compared the outcomes of students who received school VIP services with those of similarly situated students who did not (i.e., comparison students). We used propensity score matching to construct a comparison group of students that closely mirrors school VIP students on key metrics, such as demographics and school performance. More specifically, we assessed changes in key outcomes that reflect student success and engagement in school (grade point average, days absent, and suspensions) between the 2022–23 and 2023–24 academic years for school VIP students and compared those changes with those observed among comparison students during the same time frame.

After linking DVP and OUSD data and restricting the sample to students who had data available for both years, there were 96 participants with data suitable for the outcome analysis who could be matched, and 278 students in the comparison group. Comparison group students were drawn from schools that did not have VIP services (54 percent) and schools that did have these services (41 percent). Our analyses did not reveal a statistically significant impact of the school VIP program on grade point average, days absent, or suspensions. It is important to note that this analysis is limited by the small sample size and the recent implementation of school VIP teams in schools. More years of data, coupled with more participants and higher consent rates, would strengthen these analyses. Furthermore, better tracking of student ID numbers, names, and dates of birth would facilitate more successful linking to OUSD data to understand student characteristics and outcomes. More than 100 participants could not be linked to the OUSD data because of these data issues.

We also examined trends in responses to the California Healthy Kids Survey on metrics including students' perceptions of safety and knowledge of where to get help, for Oakland schools that did and did not have school VIP services. While the most recent year for which those data are available was 2023, very early in the school VIP program implementation period, there was a notable increase from 2022 to 2023 in students in schools with VIP teams reporting that it was either very or pretty much true that they knew where to go to get help with a problem (from 55 percent to 64 percent). No equivalent increase was observed among students in Oakland high schools that did not have VIP teams.

Given the above limitations, we characterize these results as preliminary and inconclusive as to the overall impact of school VIP services on the outcomes of interest. Our qualitative research highlights some of the challenges and the learning and refinements that occurred in the early implementation the school VIP program, while also pointing to the potential of the program to meaningfully affect students' lives. For the final report, we will extend this analysis to include participants and outcomes from the 2024–25 academic year, which will strengthen the ability of the analysis to determine the program's impact.

Recommendations

Practice Recommendations

Create forums for coordination and communication across services. One of the notable strengths of the DVP service continuum is the degree of referral relationships between service providers evident in the data and the level of partnership indicated across all the provider interviews. Coordination and communication across services and specialties is appreciated where it is happening, but how much it is happening varies. Many interviewees reported spending substantial time establishing and maintaining relationships needed to meet service participants' needs, and more formalized coordination might make this aspect of their work easier. Regular coordination might also help providers address emerging trends related to patterns of violence or participant needs, as the shooting-review meetings do for providers who participate in them.

Deliver more cross-training of staff across organizations. Relatedly, many providers appreciated the opportunities they had to attend trainings with peers from other organizations and specialties, and felt the increased mutual understanding from those engagements supported better operational collaboration in the field.

Enhance housing and mental health service options. The gaps in options available to meet service participants' needs for housing and mental health services came up repeatedly. These are difficult and long-standing issues that interviewees consistently said are barriers to providing effective assistance to service participants.

Help providers increase capacity. Funded community-based organization providers wanted more assistance with building capacity from the DVP and from the City of Oakland generally. This could mean finding ways to increase staffing and staff capacity to mitigate challenges from staff turnover and vacancies; making the yearly grant process easier for grantees, who are often managing reporting requirements from multiple grants from multiple sources; and identifying additional funding sources for providers who are addressing complex needs and finding that the available resources, while needed and appreciated, remain insufficient relative to program participants' needs.

Data Recommendations

The City of Oakland and the DVP may want to revisit the process for requesting participants' consent to use their data for evaluation purposes, to determine whether there are ways to deliver necessary privacy protections while better supporting outcome analysis of the impact of DVP-funded services. The current process and resulting levels of consent (38 percent of school VIP service participants) significantly limit the ability to connect service engagement and outcomes beyond a small and potentially unrepresentative subset of participants. Findings on the impact of services on the subset of participants who consented to data sharing are valuable, but estimating the impact of those services on safety and violence in the city as a whole requires going beyond understanding what is happening with that small subset. Of note, 42 percent of school VIP participants' consent forms are marked as "not complete yet" in the Apricot data system. Although the DVP has revised that form, offered trainings, and provided guidance about the consent process, providers and participants may be wary about the implications of granting consent. The DVP should explore the barriers service providers are encountering when presenting the consent form, while still communicating to participants that data sharing is voluntary.

More consistently and accurately capture dates of birth and names in the Apricot database, and consider whether additional identifiers could be added. Issues with this information made matching across data systems infeasible for many participants who had consented for evaluators to do so. Requiring that OUSD students' ID numbers be entered would facilitate linking to OUSD data to understand student outcomes.

Encourage providers to complete and update the forms in the Apricot data system more regularly and comprehensively, which will allow for a better understanding of participants' needs and levels of engagement with programming. For example, the participant and enrollment forms capture important information about education, housing, family, referral source, and exposure to violence, but many fields are not completed. Moreover, forms are inconsistently updated, and exit dates and reasons for exiting the school VIP program are missing for many students, making it difficult to measure completion rates or how long students participate in the programs.

Improve the integration of forms across the Apricot data system. Apricot is a comprehensive system with many forms specific to the different services funded by Measure Z. Some forms are based on the violence mediations or service provision but are not linkable back to participants, making analysis of service engagement more difficult. Further tracking of the schools where services and mediations occur would also be helpful.

Consider how Apricot could become a useful resource for providers. Many providers maintain their own separate databases and may not use Apricot for day-to-day case management or to track participants. Considering the breadth of the DVP network and the numbers of referrals across organizations, Apricot could become a useful resource as data tracking becomes more accurate and comprehensive.

Evaluation Next Steps

The next steps for Urban's evaluation related to the school VIP program are as follows:

- We will interview OUSD staff involved in the school VIP services. We will also invite more school VIP team members to participate in interviews to expand upon the sample included in this interim evaluation report.
- We will invite students engaged in school VIP services to participate in focus groups or interviews to better understand their experiences with the services.
- We will extend the quantitative analysis of the impacts of school VIP teams to include more data from the first half of the 2024–25 school year.

Introduction

For decades, the city of Oakland has grappled with gun and gender-based violence, and for decades Oakland has responded by making extensive investments in building capacity and mobilizing expertise to respond to existing violence and avert future violent victimization. This interim evaluation report presents findings and insights regarding one form of that investment: the school violence intervention and prevention teams (or school VIP teams). The work of these teams is overseen by the Oakland Department of Violence Prevention (DVP) and carried out by community-based organizations (CBOs), whose work is funded through the Public Safety and Services Violence Prevention Act (popularly known as “Measure Z,” see box 1). This evaluation work examining the school VIP teams is part of a larger process and impact evaluation of Measure Z–funded initiatives undertaken by the Urban Institute in partnership with Urban Strategies Council, over a three-year period from July 2022 to June 2025.

BOX 1

Measure Z and the Department of Violence Prevention

In 2014, Oakland voters passed Measure Z, the Public Safety and Services Violence Prevention Act. Measure Z built on lessons from the earlier Measure Y, the Violence Prevention and Public Safety Act of 2004. Measure Z provides approximately \$27 million in funding annually, with \$2 million designated for improving fire-response services, about \$15 million for violence-reduction efforts within the Oakland Police Department, and roughly \$10 million for violence prevention and intervention programs overseen, and in some cases directly provided, by the Department of Violence Prevention (DVP). Measure Z-funded DVP activities are grouped into four strategy areas: group violence response, gender-based violence response, community healing and restoration, and school violence intervention and prevention (VIP) teams that embed the other three strategy areas in select Oakland schools.

Established in 2017, the DVP has a mandate to reduce gun violence, intimate partner violence, and commercial sexual exploitation. Before the DVP was established, the community-led components of the City of Oakland’s violence-reduction work were housed in Oakland Unite. Oakland Unite was a division of the City’s human services department, and the DVP absorbed its functions and staff were automatically transferred from Oakland Unite to the DVP. The roles and responsibilities of Oakland Unite were fully assumed by the DVP in 2020, and the DVP also took on new functions.

Source: *Department of Violence Prevention Strategic Spending Plan, 22-24* (City of Oakland, Department of Violence Prevention, 2021).

About the School Violence Intervention and Prevention Teams

The school VIP program takes core components of the DVP's violence intervention and prevention ecosystem and embeds them in seven high schools in the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD): Castlemont High School, Dewey Academy, Fremont High School, McClymonds High School, Oakland High School, Ralph J. Bunche High School, and Ruidsdale Continuation High School. Each school VIP team consists of one life coach, one violence interrupter, and one gender-based-violence specialist. Community healing interventions funded by the DVP are also available at Castlemont High School and Ruidsdale Continuation High School to support the violence intervention and prevention work. (Other schools have restorative justice coordinators funded by OUSD.) The school VIP teams coordinate with key school staff such as principals, teachers and community school managers, and are part of each school's coordination of services team (COST) and safety team.

The genesis of the school VIP program was the OUSD school board's approval in June 2020 of the George Floyd Resolution, which eliminated the OUSD Police Department. After this, the OUSD moved to implement community-led approaches to safety and violence interruption and increase staff capacity to employ restorative practices in Oakland schools. At the same time, the Oakland City Council convened the Reimagining Public Safety Task Force, which made recommendations that included a school-based violence prevention strategy including conflict resolution and restorative justice practices in partnership with CBOs specializing in violence prevention (Oakland Department of Violence Prevention 2021). The DVP included this strategy in its 2021 request for qualifications to disburse funding to CBOs for violence intervention services. The funded school VIP program providers began their work in a pilot including the seven high schools during the 2022–23 school year. The total grant funding awarded to community-based provider organizations for the school VIP work from July 2022 through September 2024 was \$5,650,000.

The specific components of the school VIP program are as follows:

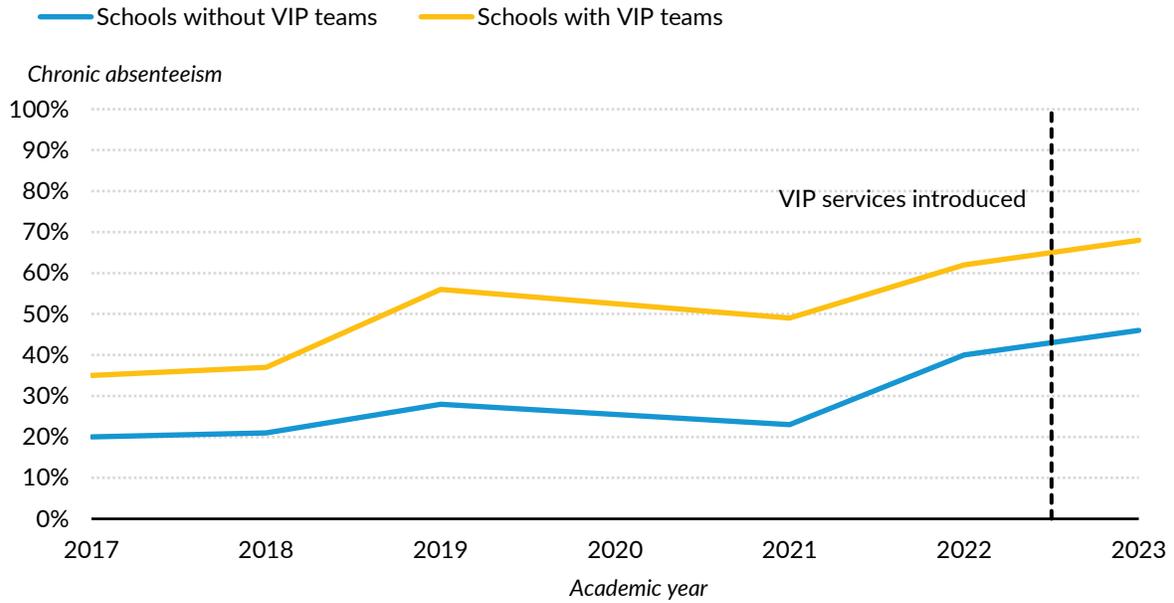
- **Gender-based violence services:** School-based gender-based-violence specialists provide short-term case management for victims of gender-based violence and make referrals to helpful services. They also deliver trainings to school staff and host educational workshops for students on dating violence, stalking, sexual harassment, sexual assault, and commercial sexual exploitation. These services are provided through school VIP teams by the Family Violence Law Center.

- **Life coaching:** School-based life coaches help students who are at risk of violence or at the center of violence identify and reach goals that reduce their risk for violence (e.g., obtaining employment, attending school regularly, avoiding negative peer influences). Life coaches refer students to helpful services and help them with system navigation, socioemotional skill development, and strengthening family ties. Life coaches have frequent contact with their clients and use financial incentives to encourage positive behavior change. These services are provided through school VIP teams by Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice, the East Bay Asian Youth Center, the Student Program for Academic and Athletic Transitioning, and Youth ALIVE!
- **Violence interruption:** School-based violence interrupters conduct safety assessments for students at risk for violence, mediate student conflicts, facilitate support groups for students who are group affiliated, and refer students to helpful services. School-based violence interrupters communicate with school administrators about active or potential student conflicts and conduct outreach to family members of at-risk students. As of the 2024–25 school year, they also deliver trainings for staff on signs and causes of violence and host support groups for families. These services have been provided through school VIP teams by Community & Youth Outreach,¹ Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice, and Youth ALIVE!
- **Community healing:** School-based community healing providers facilitate healing and community-building circles in response to incidents of violence at school or in the community. Providers also deliver trainings in restorative justice practices for teachers and school administrators. These services are provided by Restorative Justice for Oakland Youth.

The school VIP teams began their work at a time when Oakland students and schools were recovering from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Chronic absenteeism in Oakland high schools has been increasing since the pandemic and is well over 50 percent for schools with VIP teams (figure 1).

FIGURE 1

Rates of Chronic Absenteeism in High Schools with and without VIP Teams



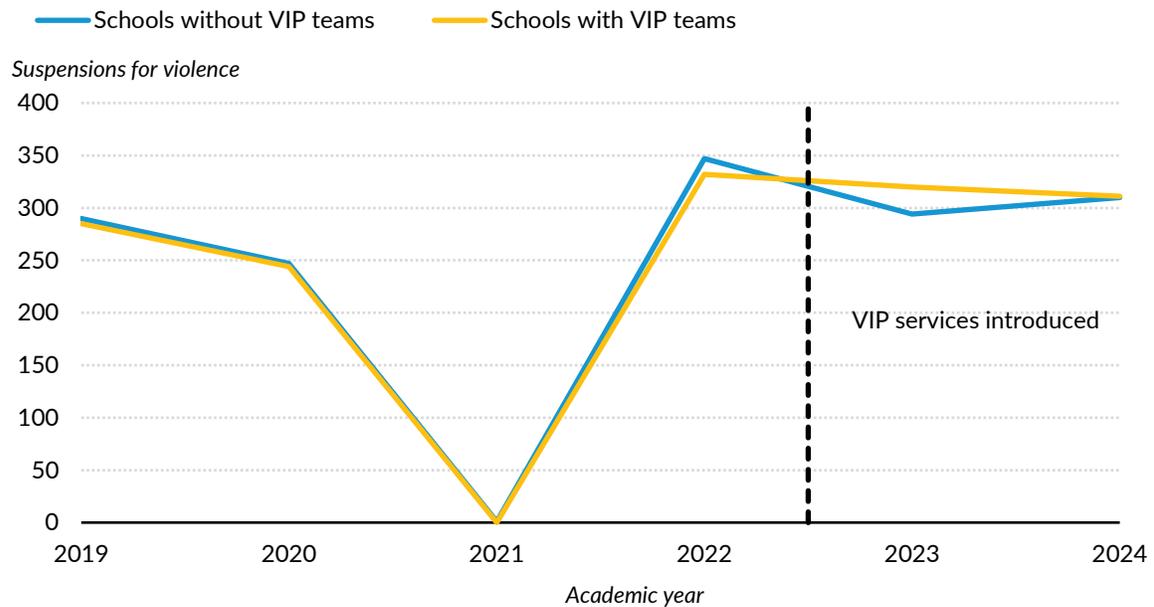
Source: "Absenteeism Data," California Department of Education, accessed October 4, 2024, <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/ad/chronicdata.asp>.

Note: VIP = violence intervention and prevention.

Oakland high schools also saw increases in suspensions for violence coming out of the pandemic. Numbers of such suspensions were similar between the schools hosting and not hosting VIP teams, although the schools without VIP teams had more total students, meaning the rate of suspensions for violence was higher in schools with VIP teams.

FIGURE 2

Suspensions for Violence in Schools with and without VIP Teams



Source: “Suspension Data,” California Department of Education, accessed October 4, 2024, <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/ad/filesd.asp>.

Notes: VIP = violence intervention and prevention. The 2020–21 school year was virtual because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Only one suspension occurred during that school year.

Prior Evaluation Findings

The phase of the Measure Z evaluation covered in this report follows and builds upon work led by Mathematica, whose evaluation work covered the implementation and impacts of Oakland Unite’s strategy areas from 2016 to 2020. While the school VIP teams began their work after Mathematica’s evaluation concluded, findings about similar interventions for young people before 2020 provide valuable context about the work of the school VIP teams.

Life-coaching services help people who are at risk of violence or have been involved in violence in Oakland identify and reach goals that reduce their risk of violence. Youth life coaching had significant positive impacts on high school retention and graduation rates over a 30-month period (Gonzalez et al. 2021). Participants ($n=192$) were 13 percent more likely to remain in school and 11 percent more likely to graduate than a comparison group of peers who did not participate. However, effects on other outcomes were mixed, as young people in life coaching were 13 percent more likely to become victims of reported violent incidents. Though there was a short-term reduction in arrests for violent offenses (most young people who participated in life coaching had contact with the justice system in

the year leading up to services), no long-term reductions in law enforcement contact were observed. These results came in the context of challenges with fully delivering the services to participants; Mathematica found that only a quarter of young people completed services as recommended by the Oakland Unite life-coaching model.

From 2017 to 2018, youth employment services primarily served African American and Hispanic young people at risk of violence, focusing on those who had low attendance at school or were experiencing violence (Gonzalez, Lacoé, et al. 2019). Although the strategy targeted people ages 13 to 18, 39 percent of participants were older than 18 at the time of enrollment. Only 54 percent of school-age employment services participants were enrolled in an Oakland or Alameda County public school in the 12 months before receiving services. Among those students, 50 percent were chronically absent from school and 22 percent were suspended or expelled during the 12 months before receiving services. Almost a quarter of participants in youth employment services reported being a victim of violence to the Oakland Police Department before receiving services, and 59 percent reported that they had a peer or family member who had been shot or seriously injured.

School-age employment services participants ($n=179$) were 13 percent more likely to be enrolled in school in the 12 months after starting services, and they had similar school attendance and discipline as the comparison group. They also had similar rates of contact with law enforcement, arrests, convictions, and victimization as the comparison group in the 12 months after beginning services. Mathematica's process evaluation highlighted challenges with collaboration between employment services and life-coaching providers arising from competition for young people's time and differing approaches to serving them (Gonzalez, Lacoé, et al. 2019).

Mathematica conducted a process evaluation of the implementation of Oakland Unite's commercial sexual exploitation youth-intervention substrategy (Gonzalez, Hu, et al. 2019b). This substrategy provided funding for services to support young people who were at risk of or were currently experiencing commercial sexual exploitation. The process evaluation found that agencies were serving the intended population of girls and young women of color with histories of victimization, contact with law enforcement, and school disengagement. Oakland Unite's approach was aligned with the California Department of Social Services Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children Program guidelines, which outline a three-tiered approach to supporting young people consisting of immediate crisis response, initial services that address immediate needs, and ongoing support involving case planning and coordination. The services offered by Oakland Unite agencies focused on short-term crisis response and stabilization. The unmet needs of young people who had experienced commercial sexual exploitation included mental health support, stable relationships with

caring adults, and safe, stable housing. Although many returned for support, providing ongoing support to address young people's unmet needs may necessitate longer-term care and relationship-building. Although agencies serving this population had a shared understanding of it, the broader violence prevention community did not have a standard process for identifying and referring young people at risk of commercial sexual exploitation. In addition, a cohesive strategy for serving these young people was lacking, and collaboration and communication across stakeholders was needed.

Urban's Evaluation Methodology

The DVP component of the Measure Z evaluation focuses only on strategies and activities implemented by the CBOs that received Measure Z funding. It does not cover services provided directly by DVP staff. **The evaluation has three components.**

First, our descriptive analysis presents data on the amount and nature of activity undertaken by the DVP and its funded community partners. These include data on the characteristics of participants, services provided, and outcomes recorded. This component draws from the DVP's Apricot data-management system. In addition to the analyses described in this report, the evaluation supported the development of public data dashboards, available at <https://www.oaklandca.gov/topics/dvp-measure-z-funded-grantee-network-data-dashboard>; the dashboards provide further details about the strategies and activities funded by Measure Z. The following research questions are addressed in this component:

- How many people were served in each program? How many community activities occurred?
 - » What were the characteristics of these clients and activities?
- What was the dosage of the various Measure Z-funded DVP activities, at the client and community levels?

Second, our process evaluation addresses questions about the implementation of the Measure Z-funded activities, going beyond descriptive information about what activities were undertaken to understand how well they are working and identify implementation challenges and successes. The following research questions are addressed in this component:

- How were the Measure Z-funded DVP activities implemented?
- What are the facilitators of and barriers to success for each DVP strategy and activity?

- How do the different Measure Z–funded components interact and relate to an overall approach to violence reduction?

Third, our impact evaluation assesses whether the Measure Z–funded activities are realizing intended outcomes at the individual level. The following research questions are addressed in this component:

- Do people engaged by Measure Z–funded services fare better in terms of safety, well-being, and justice-system involvement than similarly situated people who are not engaged?
- Do Measure Z–funded activities affect community perceptions of safety and well-being?

QUALITATIVE DATA COLLECTION

The Urban Institute and Urban Strategies Council conducted seven semistructured individual interviews with CBO provider staff members working on the school VIP program. The interviews occurred virtually from May 2024 through July 2024.

Leadership and staff at the CBOs funded by Measure Z to provide school VIP services were informed of the interview opportunity via email using contact information provided by the DVP. The outreach stated the specific activity or program of interest for the interview (e.g., VIP violence interruption or gender-based violence services) so that the organization could identify the staff directly involved in the activity or program. Each potential interview began with an informed-consent process in which staff could decide whether to proceed with the interview. The interview questions asked about their roles and responsibilities, how the activity or program was being implemented, referral sources, collaboration across agencies and with the schools, participants' needs and outcomes, and implementation challenges and successes.

ADMINISTRATIVE DATA SOURCES AND ANALYSIS

The Urban Institute executed a data-sharing agreement with the City of Oakland to receive data from the Department of Violence Prevention and the Oakland Police Department and an agreement with the Oakland Unified School District. Table 1 lists the types of data received and analyzed in this report. The DVP provided data from its records-management system, called Apricot, which was launched in January 2023. Apricot contains data on individual participants and the services they received as well as on group services and violence mediations. Although Apricot launched in 2023, the DVP was able to carry over data from 2022 that were collected through its previous system, Cityspan.

As part of the grant requirements, the DVP-funded service providers report data in Apricot, allowing for more uniform data and consistent analysis across all providers.

TABLE 1

Sources of Data Used in This Interim Evaluation of Measure Z–Funded Services

Data source and type	Data coverage
<i>Oakland Department of Violence Prevention</i> Service provision and participation	July 2022–June 2024
<i>Oakland Police Department</i> Arrest incidents	January 2012–June 2024
<i>Oakland Unified School District</i> Student characteristics and performance	August 2022–June 2024

Oakland Police Department data on arrests include adult and juvenile arrests and show the arrest location and associated charges. Homicide data include all adult and juvenile homicide victims in Oakland. Oakland Unified School District data cover all students and include information about the schools attended, grade point average, attendance, and suspensions. We also accessed publicly available data about schools from the California Department of Education.

LIMITATIONS

This evaluation has several important limitations. The first is the fact that Apricot, the DVP’s new data-entry and -management system, went live in January 2023. Adopting a new system like Apricot involves a learning curve, and data-entry inconsistencies and quality-control issues frequently arise and need to be fixed. Urban worked closely with the DVP to mitigate the impact of this change on the evaluation, including obtaining Apricot data extracts as early as possible to become familiar with the data structure and begin asking questions well in advance of the delivery dates for evaluation analyses. Nonetheless, providers’ data-collection practices may have differed as they began using Apricot, which may be reflected in our data.

Another limitation is that people participating in individual-level Measure Z activities can refuse to consent to their individually identifiable information being shared with the evaluation team. This information is not necessary for the descriptive analyses presented in this report but is needed to match across datasets and assess many outcomes (like school suspensions). The consent rates differed by service, but for school VIP services as a whole the consent rate was 38 percent and for each service a large share of participants did not consent. This means that all outcome analyses involving data linking are restricted to the subset of participants who agreed to share their individually

identifiable information. More information about the consent rates is available in the next section and the appendix.

School VIP Descriptive Analysis

From the inception of the school VIP program in the 2022–23 school year through the 2023–24 school year, 544 students had at least one DVP-funded service connected to the school VIP teams recorded in Apricot. Gender-based-violence services engaged the largest number of students followed by life coaching (table 2). In terms of specific services, by far the most common were case management and life coaching, with over 90 percent of activities recorded in Apricot belonging to those two categories. Students recorded as school VIP service participants received an average of 27 service sessions (e.g., case-management meetings or life-coaching sessions).

TABLE 2
School VIP Individual Participants by Service Type

	Number of participants
Service type	
Gender-based violence services	255
Life coaching	196

Source: Urban Institute analysis of Apricot data provided by the Oakland Department of Violence Prevention.

Notes: VIP = violence intervention and prevention. Community healing and violence interruption are not individual-level services, but 59 students were recorded in Apricot as having received a community-healing service and 18 a violence-interruption service.

Comparing the demographics of school VIP team clients with all students in schools where school VIP teams were based, we see that female students were disproportionately likely to access school VIP services: 60 percent of all school VIP clients were female, compared with 45 percent of all students in their schools. When breaking down the individual service types, female students composed 74 percent of recipients of gender-based-violence services, while male students composed 60 percent of life-coaching participants. We also see that African American students were disproportionately likely to access school VIP services, whereas Hispanic or Latino students, who made up 58 percent of all students in schools with school VIP teams, made up only 29 percent of students receiving school VIP services.² This may reflect differential risk, as African American high school students in Oakland are suspended at much higher rates than Hispanic/Latino students.³

TABLE 3

School VIP Program Client Demographics

Share of participants (n=544)	
Race/ethnicity	
African American	44%
Asian	3%
Hispanic or Latino	29%
Multiracial	6%
White	1%
Declined to State	14%
Other	3%
Gender	
Female	60%
Male	38%
Nonbinary or transgender	0.2%

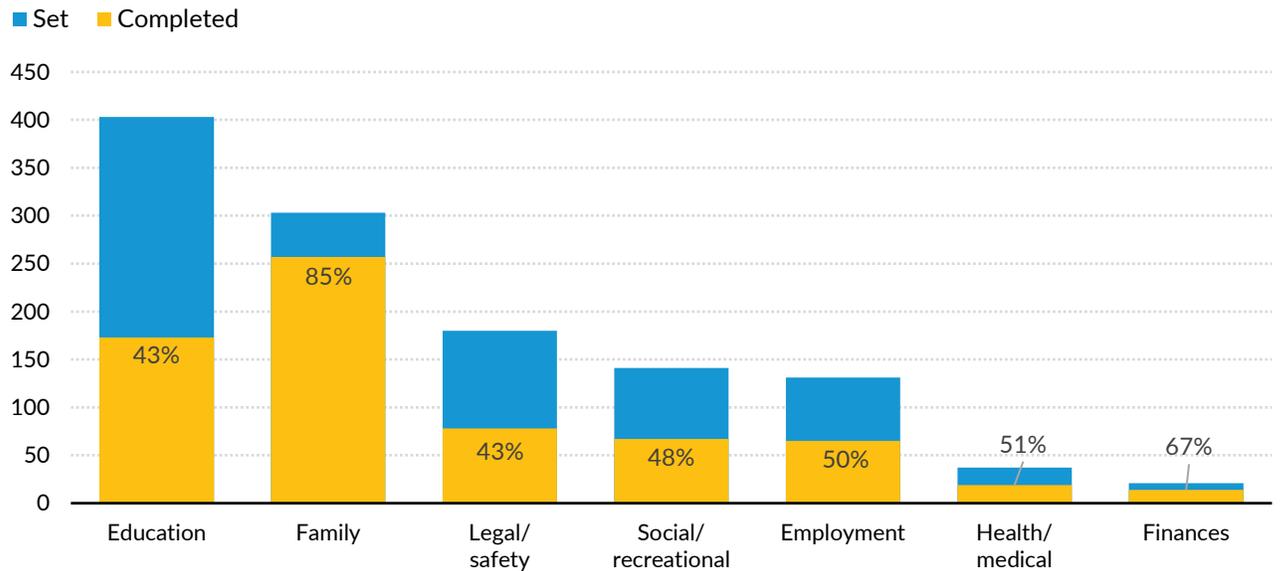
Source: Urban Institute analysis of Apricot data provided by the Oakland Department of Violence Prevention.

Note: VIP = violence intervention and prevention.

Life coaches work with students to identify and reach goals that reduce their risk for violence (e.g., obtaining employment, attending school regularly, avoiding negative peer influences) and work with them to achieve related milestones that can promote safety and success. Figure 3 shows life-coaching goals and completion rates among school VIP clients.

FIGURE 3

Life-Coaching Goals and Completion Rates for School VIP Clients



Source: Urban Institute analysis of Apricot data provided by the Oakland Department of Violence Prevention.

Notes: "Other" includes goals related to health/medical, safety, and housing/shelter. Percentages are the percentages of set goals that have been completed.

While the majority of school VIP life-coaching participants who had at least one goal recorded (122 of 157) set individualized educational goals, such as “receive passing semester grades” or “achieve consistent attendance in GED/Tutoring/High School Diploma/College Program,” students receiving life coaching through the school VIP program are encouraged to set goals that go beyond the classroom.⁴ Through the end of the 2023–24 school year, 46 students had set 107 goals related to family and relationships, such as “build better bonds with grandparents,” and 64 students has set 106 goals that addressed current and future employment goals, including “getting an afternoon/weekend job.” Life coaches then set timelines for the students to work toward these goals and followed up with students to track progress and promote accountability.

Students have met a sizeable share of their goals, with over 47 percent of the goals recorded in Apricot as completed. Students demonstrated particular success with education and family/relationship goals and continue to make progress on a large majority of all goals. If we consider only goals that have either been successfully completed or were “abandoned” (the term in the Apricot data system), students met 78 percent of all goal targets. After successfully meeting their goals, students are encouraged to set additional targets and continue to build on past progress.

School VIP teams also referred young people to an array of external services (table 4). The most common were employment services, followed by education and financial services.

TABLE 4
School VIP Program Referrals to External Services

	Number of referrals
Services	
Employment	112
Education	88
Financial services	35
Mental health	28
Other	19
Family support services	14
Housing	7
Legal	7
Physical health	5

Source: Urban Institute analysis of Apricot data provided by the Oakland Department of Violence Prevention.

Note: VIP = violence intervention and prevention.

In addition to providing services to individual students, school VIP teams host support groups and events. The VIP teams also meet with school administrators around coordination and relevant safety issues. The community healing services provider working with the VIP teams in two schools supports their work by holding community building and restorative events. Total attendance at these varied

group activities was well over 7,000 over the 2022–23 and 2023–24 school years, although this includes individuals participating in these events multiple times.

TABLE 5
School VIP–Related Events Held August 2022 to June 2024

Event type	Number of events	Average attendance per event
Community building/restorative event	12	32
Gender-based violence school group	231	13
Healing and support group	99	12
School administrator meeting—other	15	4
School administrator meeting— coordination of services team	11	7
Training	45	14

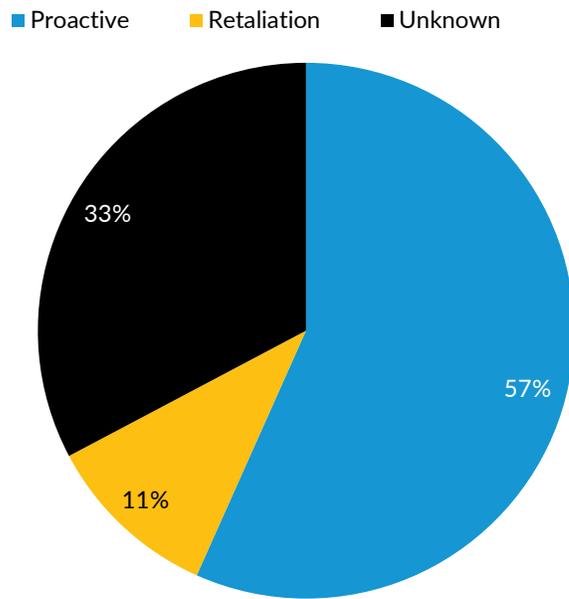
Source: Urban Institute analysis of Apricot data provided by the Oakland Department of Violence Prevention.

Note: VIP = violence intervention and prevention.

Violence interrupters within the school VIP teams also conduct violence mediation. During the two school years during the evaluation period, 681 violence mediations occurred at schools or were recorded by school VIP teams. Most mediations were proactive (57 percent), whereas fewer (11 percent) focused on preventing retaliation (figure 4). On average, two to three people were involved in each mediation. Most mediations focused on mediation between students, although mediations involving school administrators were also common. Parents, teachers, and community members were involved in a small share (less than 15 percent) of recorded mediations.

FIGURE 4

Violence Mediations Conducted by School VIP Teams, by Type of Mediation (n=681)



Source: Urban Institute analysis of Apricot data provided by the Oakland Department of Violence Prevention.

Note: VIP = violence intervention and prevention.

Process Evaluation Findings

To shed light on the initial stages of the implementation of the school VIP program, the evaluation team interviewed seven CBO staff members delivering school VIP services, including those focusing on each of the four school VIP program components. Staff were asked to reflect on general successes and challenges of the school VIP program and elaborate on their own and students' perceptions of program achievements to date.

Program Structure and Team Roles

Interview participants were asked to describe their roles on the school VIP teams, how their teams were structured, and how team members worked together. The role of the violence interrupters was described as preventing and mediating conflicts, preventing retaliatory violence, and preventing violence from spilling over from the community into the school and vice versa. Interviewees addressed the bidirectional relationship between conflicts in the schools and in the streets, with one observing, "What happens in school can spill out into the streets...It's all connected." As an example, an interviewee said they might hear about a robbery that happened outside of the school, try to learn who was involved and whether they went to the same school or different schools, and try to engage the young people involved. The purpose of doing this was to avoid the incident developing into a conflict that might affect the safety of the students involved and the school generally. Interviewees said that violence interrupters in schools were responding more to fights and potential fights, whereas violence interrupters in the community were mostly responding to shootings. From their perspective, this meant that school-based violence interrupters had more of an opportunity to intervene in situations "before something gets out of hand." An interviewee named coordination with the coordination of services team as important for violence interrupters to understand who might need their attention.

Consistent with these activities, the role of the violence interrupters was described as short-term intervention, a role that would ideally involve engaging young people with the life coaches to support their ongoing success. At the same time, violence interrupters described work they were doing to create spaces to connect with students, open lines of communication, and create trust. Examples included hosting pizza parties for young people or cooking with them. Violence interrupters noted the flexibility that the school VIP program allowed for coming up with different ways to create these spaces. As one summarized it, "We have a lot of freedom." Another interviewee noted that this

flexibility allowed violence interrupters to do some things that schools couldn't do to incentivize student effort and staying out of fights (such as bringing an ice cream truck to campus).

Interviewees described school VIP life coaches as the advocates for students they work with, “meeting them where they are” to identify and realize important life goals. When a student is referred to life-coaching services, the life coach either conducts a home visit or meets with one of the student's parents at the school. The life coach then works with the student to create a life map, outlining three to five top priorities and laying a foundation for how to reach them. As goals are completed, the life coach and student do another cycle of assessments and life-mapping goals. One interviewee distinguished this structured approach from other youth-engagement approaches such as mentoring: “I think so often in mentoring we know the right goals, but don't really focus on the nuances of, what do you need to get there?” Interviewees also emphasized that students participating in life coaching are given a voice in creating their plans. Interviewees described the approach of school-based life coaching as similar to the youth life coaching funded by Measure Z in the community, but said the school-based life coaching focuses more on academic markers of success like graduation and attendance.

Interviewees described teachers and other school staff as the primary source of referrals to life coaching. (While less than 20 percent of students who participated in school VIP services had a referral source recorded in Apricot, the vast majority of students for whom that information was available were school referrals.) Interviewees described initially using the same risk-factor-eligibility screener for school VIP life-coaching referrals as for youth life coaching in community settings. They said that through ongoing discussions and feedback from the school VIP partners, including from school administrators, eligibility for participating in school VIP services was broadened. School administrators might reach out about students in conflicts or other situations that could lead to involvement in violence, or a student might come to the attention of the violence interrupter because of a fight or situation off campus that could show up in the school. Interviewees described these means of referral as important because they helped bring students to the attention of VIP teams who might be appropriate for intervention but didn't always have commonly understood flags of risk, like histories of justice-system involvement. As one interviewee put it, “A lot of participants that really needed support hadn't been incarcerated, hadn't been on probation, but for a lack of better words, they were kicking up a lot of dust.”

As described in the interviews, the gender-based-violence specialist's role is to offer strategic programming for cohorts of young people to learn about gender-based violence, build peer-education strategies, and develop self-awareness and tools to regulate emotions. The goal for these specialists

was to equip students to be in safe and healthy relationship with others. At the individual level, these specialists engage in case management for students, although an interviewee emphasized that it was important for case management to be complemented with education and more holistic support. At the school level, the gender-based-violence specialists work to train staff and change school culture to better handle gender-based violence. From one interviewee's perspective, this was important for increasing attention to gender-based violence. "Gender-based violence wasn't even a topic of conversation before. We ensured that in every meeting or space we were in, it was lifted up." The same interviewee emphasized a need to work with school administrators to implement systems to prevent and address gender-based violence in schools.

Lastly, staff working on the community healing and restoration component of the school VIP work do community-building activities in two schools. These could be tailored to the specific needs of each school, and an interviewee working on this substrategy described asking principals to send two or three questions to teachers about areas they wanted to see addressed over the school year. In one school, it was noted that girls in ninth and tenth grade accounted for a large number of suspensions. The community healing specialist set up girls' groups, 12-week voluntary courses that provided students with food, stipends, and opportunities to discuss issues in their lives.

Collaboration

Interviewees emphasized that they centered collaboration in their work. One interviewee described weekly coordination meetings where the school VIP team would confer on which situations fit with different team members' expertise and when different students might be more willing to engage with one team member and their activities than another (for instance, a student may not want to participate in conflict mediation and may only want to work with their life coach). That said, interviewees said collaboration differed for schools and partners. Interviewees spoke about how they learned which forms of collaboration worked best for each partner. During busier parts of the school year, school VIP team members held more meetings with each community-based organization to share updates and discuss shared challenges. Some interviewees described a lack of communication between the CBOs whose staff members made up the school VIP teams and inconsistency in whether meetings actually happened weekly.

One important aspect of the school VIP teams' collaboration involved how conflicts and other situations that might require their intervention came to the attention of team members, particularly the violence interrupters. As respondents described it, the process of conflict notification relies heavily

on informal communication channels, such as word of mouth and direct outreach from the DVP and CBOs. Notifications are typically communicated via texts, phone calls, and emails, emphasizing and promoting a network of personal relationships. These casual communications between students and service providers are intended to help the providers intervene “before something pops off or gets more serious” by regularly engaging with students and making sure they’re willing to discuss minor conflicts before they develop further. School VIP staff also work with school teams that can refer students through an online portal. All school staff, including principals, teachers, and counselors, can access this portal and submit referrals. Additionally, referrals can come from probation officers.

Interview participants outlined how working relationships between the violence interrupters and life coaches help both be more effective. For example, the relationships life coaches build with participants can be leveraged to help violence interrupters with groups they run and intervene in conflicts. Coordination between the two can be key in responding to emerging threats to student safety. For example, at one school, in response to an ongoing conflict being monitored by the violence interrupter, the life coach took a student home early from school and explored possible placements in different schools. In cases when a young person is involved in a conflict or at risk of being involved in one and declines to work with a life coach, violence interrupters will check in with them periodically. This maintains a line of connection between the young person and the school VIP program and keeps the door open for them to engage in life coaching if they change their mind. The degree of operational collaboration with the gender-based-violence specialists described in the interviews seemed to be less than that between the life coaches and violence interrupters, although mutual respect for the particular focus, sensitivities, and tools of each professional was a clear theme. One factor in this may be the particular boundaries around client confidentiality for the gender-based-violence specialists, which limit information sharing with other VIP team members absent written consent.

School VIP teams benefited from their connections throughout Oakland’s broader violence prevention and intervention ecosystem. Interviewees highlighted the benefits of drawing upon the relationships established by the community-based work funded by the DVP, inviting CBOs to meetings and using their networks. As one interviewee put it, “We often invite other community-based organizations to come and sit down with us....We have a large network.” Interviewees described connecting students to supports including therapeutic support, mental health services, support specific to the LGBTQ community, and emergency shelter.

Successes and Facilitators

Interview respondents shared many insights on factors that supported the success of school VIP teams and what they saw as the successes of the program through its first two school years. One of the greatest early implementation successes they described was developing open, trusting relationships with students and their families. They felt students and families saw them as credible messengers. As one interviewee described student reactions to support groups held as part of the school VIP work, students “want to be there, getting good feedback, get a space to talk, learn RJ [restorative justice], ask about internships,” and ask for general advice from trusted adults. By offering students a new way to engage and resolve conflicts, students are increasingly “able to perceive situations from a different lens that makes them able to take accountability and perceive what they did wrong.” An interview respondent involved in the gender-based-violence component shared that around that issue an important success was that young people had a safe adult on campus they could be themselves with and ask for support.

In addition to general successes engaging students, interviewees spoke about more specific successes, such as students getting paid internships, improving their grades, joining sports teams, getting discharged from probation supervision early, and graduating from high school. As one person put it, “Any time youth graduate and do not grab a gun, it’s a huge success.” A respondent noted that they had seen young people involved in gender-based-violence services using the problem-solving tools they had been provided with to address conflicts.

Several interviewees also stated that the program is successfully reaching students who have historically been marginalized or may be less likely to seek out help. This has been made possible by developing trusting relationships with students over the course of years and by relying on teachers and families to proactively refer struggling students. School VIP staff stated that they go out of their way to identify students who might be struggling academically, have low self-esteem, or are less outspoken, which is only made possible by having full-time school VIP staff regularly present and accessible on school campuses. In the early stages of the school VIP teams, some life coaches and violence interrupters were dividing their time between two schools. Interviewees believed that reaching the point where these team members were dedicated to a single school was a critical accomplishment. Once students were engaged, tangible incentives like stipends or paid internships were helpful in keeping them connected and motivated. One interviewee said that with the stipend, students see “a clear goal and reward....There’s space for them to be themselves and get credit for class and get paid.”

Respondents named a number of skills and qualities that supported success in engaging students and building these relationships. One was an understanding of dynamics in young people's lives, such as social media and how they communicate about issues that might lead to conflict. Examples include young people recording songs about who they might want to hurt or what might be going on, or using graffiti. Respondents also said previous experience working in schools can make VIP team members more effective by helping them understand how schools work. An example was familiarity with individualized education plans, which outline the specialized instruction and support services a child with a disability needs to succeed in school and which many students connecting with the school VIP teams might have.

One of the themes that emerged most consistently from the interviews was the central role collaboration played in the success of the school VIP work. The working relationships established around school VIP teams were themselves seen as a significant accomplishment; one person explained that one of the most important implementation successes of the school VIP teams has been a commitment to collaboration, including an openness to changing things as needed, between the DVP, the schools, and the CBOs operating parts of the school VIP teams. The value of the DVP's coordinating role was emphasized, with monthly meetings with all school-based providers and one-on-one meetings between the DVP and each provider organization serving as important venues for planning and identifying areas for improvement. Stakeholders said this communication had increased and that gaps in communication early on in the school VIP program had been addressed. While "it's still a thing that's growing," in one respondent's view, the meeting structure was seen as having helped a lot.

An example of the role of collaboration in the development of school VIP teams concerned the ages of students participating in services. School VIP team staff noted the value of developing long-term relationships with students. Some felt it was ideal to work with students over the course of their full high-school careers, starting with them as freshmen and continuing work through graduation, teaching them new skills and updating goals along the way. As one interviewee stated, "One of the keys to life coaching is the amount of time you spend with these kids." They described some differences of opinion on this score with school administrators, who might prioritize referrals for older students who were nearer to graduation. Older students might be at greater risk, but with less time before they graduated and limits on staff capacity, many felt they could more effectively shape positive youth trajectories starting with younger students. A theme in the interviews was the receptivity of partners to this kind of feedback, which resulted in space to work with younger students. One interviewee said simply that the collaboration with the schools had been "amazing."

“I think the biggest thing is starting a pilot and just sticking through it.”

—School VIP team partner, on program successes

Challenges

School-based VIP service providers described many challenges with the school VIP teams' work. To start with, there were the challenges interviewees described the students facing. These included exposure to difficult and traumatic experiences such as homicides, gang involvement, and drug use and a lack of home support or sounding boards for talking about their situations. Participants also discussed emerging challenges facing young people that were not as prevalent in the past, such as cyberbullying and the harms that come from excessive social media use. One of the largest challenges has been understanding how to address the traumas several students have faced. One interviewee explained that “most of the individuals I've worked with have witnessed someone be murdered in front of them” and that no two students will respond to trauma in the same way. As a result, some students come to school angry and can be easily triggered.

Not every student in this situation may want to be supported, a dynamic that can extend to their families, particularly those grieving or distrustful of systems. One respondent highlighted this issue: “I wish that these families would want support from CBOs, but sometimes they're not ready and are just in grief.” Another noted that many parents and caregivers are at capacity and have limited ability to engage with school VIP services alongside students. Funds for family engagement are available to the teams, but in some cases student service participants attend activities supported by those funds but few families do so.

While the school VIP program benefited from the DVP's coordination and support, as covered in the previous section, that relationship also came with challenges. For example, the processes involved in city grant funding could be difficult. As one interviewee explained, “Funding is also a challenge, with the bureaucracy of the city.” Delays getting funding to CBOs was noted as a stress for them. Leadership changes at the DVP also introduced some hurdles, as each leadership change requires getting new administrators up to speed, building trust with new leadership, and establishing open lines of communication.

School VIP teams also faced significant resource constraints, including not having adequate space in schools to engage with students confidentially. And in addition to funding limits, there are

significant time constraints owing to students' and teachers' schedules and service providers' competing responsibilities. One interviewee stated that the most pressing challenge is putting adequate time into student engagement: "The more you invest time into a student, the more you will get out of it. If you only see them once a week, you're not going to get what you want out of it." It is particularly challenging when students reach out at times when school VIP staff are dealing with other responsibilities. Given the urgency of violence interruption services, students are encouraged to reach out to school VIP staff whenever conflicts arise, but this means that staff are expected to be available at all times. Interviewees raised these challenges with resource constraints in the context of high levels of perceived need for these services among students. For example, one interviewee thought almost all the students in their school would benefit from life coaching, as almost all of them are dealing with some type of trauma. All these challenges can combine to leave school VIP team members feeling stretched, with too many needs to meet and not enough time to meet them. This creates some tension between realizing the benefits of the long-term engagement with students and reaching more of the many students who need the services.

A challenge raised in multiple interviews was establishing a solid understanding with school staff of the appropriate roles of school VIP team members. Multiple interviewees reported that school personnel occasionally wanted to call on VIP team members for work outside of their role, such as using violence interrupters "as security guards" to break up fights or asking life coaches to participate in hallway sweeps. Interviewees emphasized that it was critical to avoid having VIP team members do things that negatively impact students' trust and willingness to engage with them. Interviewees believed issues with understaffing in Oakland schools played a significant role in this dynamic, as school staff tried to draw upon the resources present in the schools to address gaps. Relatedly, turnover in school personnel could lead to challenges as new individuals in new positions might not understand or value the roles of school VIP teams without having worked with them before.

Lastly, for all the collaboration successes in the School VIP Program, there were also challenges with effective collaboration. Multiple interviewees mentioned "turf issues" between the participating organizations, which might arise out of concerns about maintaining funding or the belief that one's organization's approach is the only approach. Building capacity and buy-in among teachers and school staff could also be made difficult by staffing shortages and schools' bureaucratic processes. For example, training for school staff is an important part of the gender-based-violence work, but trainings are often coordinated a year in advance and staff have many other competing priorities. This has been an impediment to advancing understanding of gender-based-violence and securing staff buy-in to address it.

Suggestions for Improvement

Interviewees were asked what changes might make the school VIP work more effective. They suggested improvements in several areas, including providing more restorative justice coordinators and enhancing communication tools.

Interviewees noted that challenges recruiting participants who may be hesitant to provide feedback or get involved persist. One pointed out that “it’s hard because some people are shy or don’t want to disclose.” One way to boost engagement is to create new student groups; for example, one school piloted a girls’ group and is planning a restorative justice group in the future.

That said, the main change interviewees proposed was to increase funding. As one interviewee put it bluntly, more funding “allows for more access...two people at a location is way more effective than one.”

Other recommendations included the following:

- One interviewee expressed interest in an app or other way for staff at different organizations to share information about what’s happening in schools and to confer about it outside of weekly meetings. We learned in interviews that at least one school VIP team is using text messaging for this purpose.
- It was observed that school VIP team members working in different schools do not share much about their processes. Creating more spaces for team members to do so might support the spread of practices that address the various challenges discussed above.
- Although life coaching is funded during summer breaks, multiple interviewees said there’s nothing for the students to do during that time. Interviewees raising this issue suggested funding for a summer internship program for young people might keep students more engaged over the summer. The DVP funds youth employment services under other strategy areas, so better collaboration and referral relationships between school VIP teams and those services might also address this concern.
- Given the level of need, interviewees felt having more staff on school VIP teams would make the teams more effective.
- To increase the impact of the gender-based-violence services, interviewees suggested having the gender-based-violence specialists participate in school staff meetings, retreats, and community-building and professional-development trainings, which would give them for more

venues for advancing awareness and understanding of gender-based violence and how to address it.

- To support better collaboration across the gender-based-violence and violence interruption aspects of the school VIP strategy, one interviewee suggested investing in equipping violence interrupters with tools and skills to support young people causing harm on campus in gender-based-violence situations and with tools to collaborate with gender-based-violence specialists on preventing this kind of harm.

Outcome Analysis Findings

In this section we discuss preliminary outcomes observed for the school VIP teams. We first discuss how Oakland schools with school VIP services compare to those that do not have them, and present trend data on metrics relevant to school VIP program goals. We then examine the outcomes of students who received school VIP services to a comparison group of students who are similarly situated but did not participate in school VIP services.

Characteristics and Trends in VIP Schools

In identifying which of the OUSD's 19 high schools would receive direct services under Measure Z, the DVP sought to channel resources toward schools demonstrating need across several measures. According to figures from the 2022–23 school year provided by the California Department of Education, high schools receiving school VIP services had a graduation rate 5 percentage points below that of non-VIP schools.⁵ Furthermore, schools with school VIP teams reported a rate of chronic absenteeism, defined as missing at least 10 percent of school days for any reason, nearly 50 percent higher than schools not receiving school VIP services. School VIP teams also serve schools with students who are more likely to have unstable housing, students who are more likely to experience socioeconomic disadvantage, more students for whom English is a second language, and schools whose student bodies have larger shares of Black and Hispanic/Latino students (table 6). However, schools hosting school VIP teams have a smaller share of students with disabilities.

The most recent data available as of this writing are from 2023 and therefore cover only the earliest period of VIP service rollout. Still, trend data allow for early insights into how these services might be benefiting Oakland students. As the school VIP program operates for more years and serves more students, examining the same data will allow us to make more confident statements about the impact of the program.

TABLE 6

OUSD School Demographics by VIP Service Access, 2022–23 School Year

Characteristic	Offers school VIP services (n=4,911)	Offers school VIP services (%)	No school VIP services (n=8,320)	No school VIP services (%)
<i>Race/ethnicity</i>				
African American	1,192	24	1,788	21
Asian	491	10	740	9
Filipino	24	0.5	53	1
Hispanic or Latino	2,737	56	4,097	49
Pacific Islander	57	1	63	1
Two or more races	104	2	398	5
White	123	3	841	10
<i>Gender/sex</i>				
Female	2,199	45	3,997	48
Male	2,707	55	4,303	52
Transgender/nonbinary	0	0	11	0.1
<i>Additional measurements</i>				
English learners	2,049	42	2,143	26
Foster	23	0.5	43	0.5
Homeless	611	12	390	5
Socioeconomically disadvantaged	4,606	94	6,850	82
Student with disabilities	759	15	1,383	17

Source: “Data and Statistics,” California Department of Education, accessed October 8, 2024, <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/>.

Notes: OUSD = Oakland Unified School District. VIP = violence intervention and prevention. Four schools in the “No school VIP services” category enroll students younger than high-school age: Madison Park Academy 6-12, Coliseum College Prep Academy, LIFE Academy, and Sojourner Truth Independent Study. The available data do not make it possible to exclude these students from the school demographic data.

TABLE 7

OUSD School Characteristics by VIP Service Access, 2022-23 School Year

Characteristic	Offers school VIP services	No school VIP services
Number of Schools	7	12
Total student body	4,911	8,320
Graduation rate	76%	81%
Chronic absenteeism rate	66%	46%

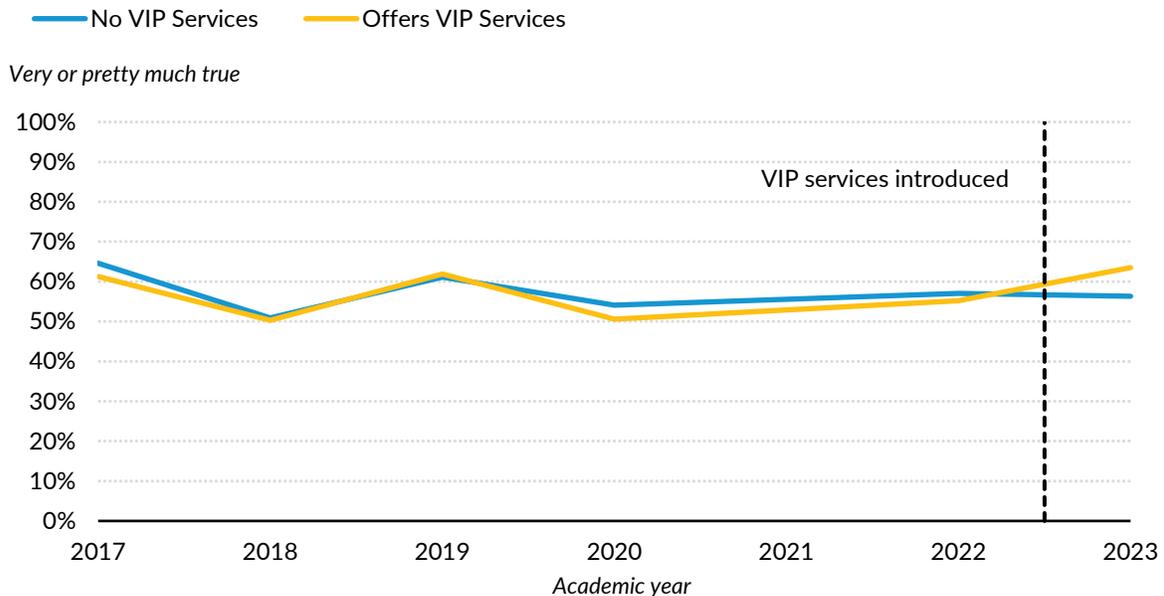
Source: “Data and Statistics,” California Department of Education, accessed October 8, 2024, <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/>.

Notes: VIP = violence prevention and intervention. The 12 non-VIP schools are Gateway to College High at Laney College, Madison Park Academy 6-12, MetWest High, Oakland Charter High, Oakland International High, Oakland Technical High, Oakland Unity High, Skyline High, Street Academy Alternative High, Coliseum College Prep Academy, LIFE Academy, and Sojourner Truth Independent Study. Four schools in the “No school VIP services” category enroll students younger than high-school age: Madison Park Academy 6-12, Coliseum College Prep Academy, LIFE Academy, and Sojourner Truth Independent Study. The available data do not make it possible to exclude these students from the school demographic data.

Each year, California students in the ninth and eleventh grades take the California Healthy Kids Survey, “an anonymous, confidential survey of school climate and safety, student wellness, and youth resiliency” with school-level data that allow for comparisons between disparate student populations.⁶ School staff take the companion California School Staff Survey. Among other items, we consider divergences in rates of perceptions of school safety, access to help, and students’ belief that their school fairly and equitably handles issues of student discipline, metrics targeted for improvement as part of DVP’s comprehensive school VIP strategy.

Before the introduction of school VIP services, students in the VIP schools tended to report lower levels of knowing where to go for help (figure 5) and consistently reported lower levels of feeling safe in school (figure 7), although not by very large margins.⁷ Oakland high schools that would later host VIP teams also reported higher rates of student instability through 2020 than did other Oakland high schools. As measured by the California Department of Education, student stability measures the percentage of students who receive a full year of learning while enrolled at a single school.

FIGURE 5
Students Knowing Where to Go for Help by VIP Service Access
“I know where to go for help with a problem”



Source: California Healthy Kids Survey, available at “Data and Statistics,” California Department of Education, accessed October 8, 2024, <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/>.

Note: VIP = violence intervention and prevention.

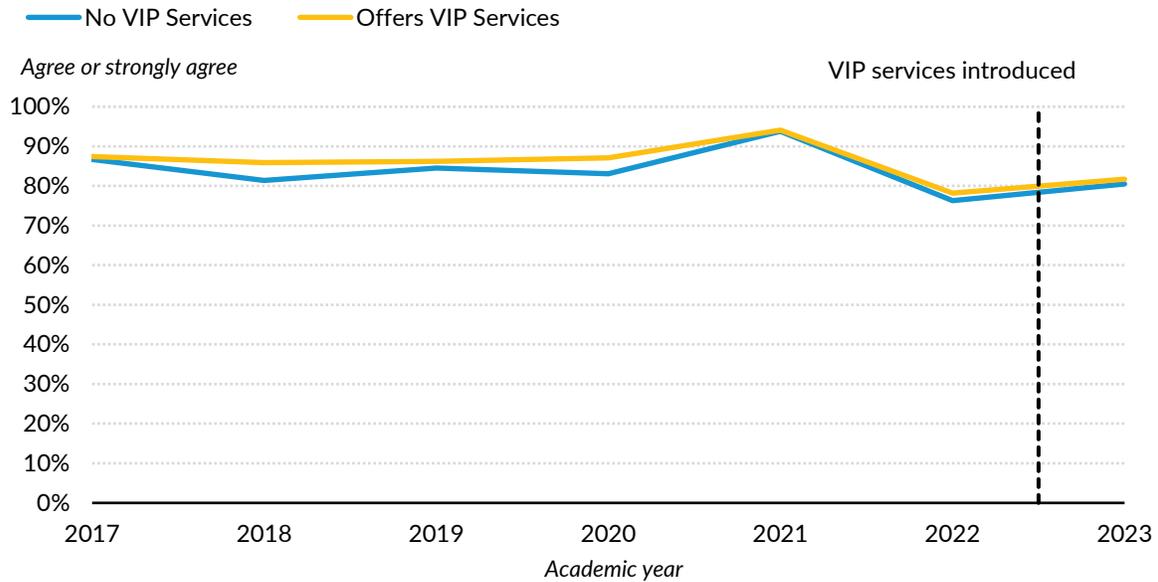
In 2023 there was a notable divergence in agreement with the statement “I know where to go for help with a problem” between schools with and without VIP teams. In 2022 55 percent of student respondents in VIP schools said it was either very or pretty much true that they knew where to go to get help with a problem, and in 2023 that had increased to 64 percent. For students in schools without VIP services, the equivalent responses were 57 percent in 2022 and 56 percent in 2023. Before 2023, levels and trends of agreement with this statement were similar between the two groups of schools. Given the strong correlation between these rates before the school VIP teams were implemented at the seven schools receiving school VIP services, this divergence during the 2022–23 school year, which presumably was affected by the presence of those teams in schools, is notable, if only an early indicator. While these findings do not necessarily mean that students were actively seeking out and accessing help at higher rates after school VIP teams were introduced, they do suggest that students were aware of where to do so.

The California Healthy Kids Survey also collected responses from teachers and staff regarding their knowledge of how to access help for students.⁸ Teachers are more likely to say they know how to get help for students than students are to say they know how to get help for themselves. From 2017 through 2020, teachers at schools that would later receive school VIP services tended to be *more* likely to state that they knew where to access help for their students than those at schools that would not receive VIP services (figure 6). We also observed a 3.5 percentage point increase in the number of teachers at VIP schools who knew where to access help for their students following the introduction of school VIP services during the 2022–23 school year. This is the largest such single-year increase excepting the anticipated increase in knowledge of where to access help following the return to in-person delivery after the worst of the pandemic, although a similar trend occurred in the non-VIP schools, making it unlikely that it was related to the VIP services.

FIGURE 6

Teachers Knowing Where to Get Help for Students by VIP Service Access

“I know where to go for help for my students”



Source: California School Staff Survey, available at “Data and Statistics,” California Department of Education, accessed October 8, 2024, <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/>.

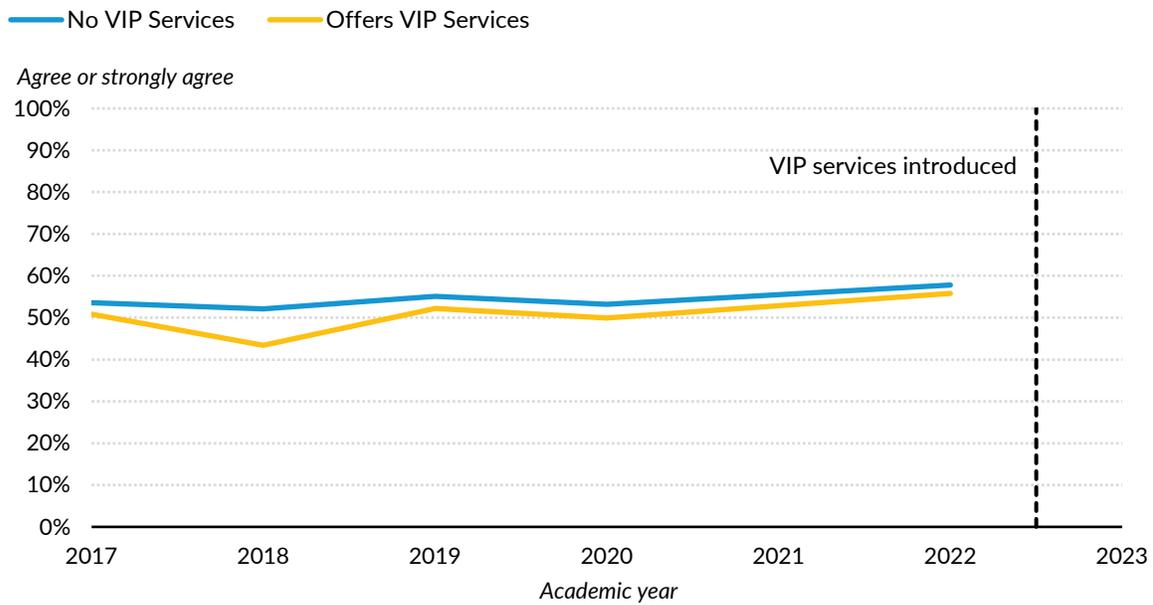
Note: VIP = violence intervention and prevention.

Unfortunately, as of this writing, the most recent available data on students’ perceptions of safety are from before the school VIP teams began their work. However, data from before the 2022–23 school year shows that students in schools where VIP teams would later be placed were less likely to say they felt safe at school. While these differences were not very large for most years, they do support that the DVP identified schools for the VIP program where students felt more safety and security concerns. Trends in perceptions of safety between students in schools that would get school VIP teams and those that would not were very similar from 2017 through 2022.⁹

FIGURE 7

Students Feelings of Safety in School by VIP Service Access

"I feel safe in my school"



Source: California Healthy Kids Survey, available at "Data and Statistics," California Department of Education, accessed October 8, 2024, <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/>.

Note: VIP = violence intervention and prevention.

Future data will allow us to consider how the introduction of violence intervention teams affected students' feelings of safety. For now, the lower reported feelings of safety among students at VIP schools make sense given the DVP's intention was to place VIP teams in schools where safety was a greater concern and indicate that resources are being properly and intentionally allocated.

Outcomes of School VIP Participants

In this section, we compare the outcomes of students who received school VIP services to similarly situated students who did not (i.e., comparison students). More specifically, we assess changes in key outcomes that reflect student success and engagement in school (GPA, days absent and suspensions) between the 2022–23 and 2023–24 academic years for school VIP students and compare these changes with those observed among comparison students during the same time frame. The difference-in-differences estimates derived from this analysis isolate the effects of the school VIP strategy from any general changes that might have affected both groups of students. The fundamental assumption of this analysis is that, in the absence of school VIP teams, outcome trends would be the same for

school VIP students and comparison students. To uphold this assumption, we use propensity score matching to construct a comparison group of students that closely mirrors school VIP students on key metrics, such as demographics and school performance.

From July 2022 to June 2024, 209 students were served by the school VIP strategy and consented to data sharing, representing 38 percent of total participants in the school VIP strategy. For the propensity score matching process, we linked a list of school VIP service recipients to data provided by the Oakland Unified School District using students' ID number, names, and dates of birth. The OUSD provided data on student characteristics and outcomes for the 2022–23 and 2023–24 academic years. After linking the data and restricting the sample to students who had data available in both years, there were 99 participants with data suitable for the outcome analysis.

We then matched the students on many characteristics, including grade year, race/ethnicity, gender, special education status, current grade point average (GPA), whether they attended more than one school, whether they were suspended, and the number of days they were absent in the 2022–23 school year. The matching resulted in 96 school VIP participants and 278 comparison students, as 3 participants did not have suitable matches. The comparison students included students in schools with school VIP teams who did not get services from them and students in schools without VIP teams. In the 2022–23 school year, 41 percent of comparison students attended schools with VIP teams and in the 2023–24 school year, 54 percent of comparison students attended one.

Table 8 shows the similarities between school VIP students and their comparison group across a range of demographic characteristics and academic characteristics. The two groups are very similar across all matched characteristics. Given the similarity between the two groups, it is reasonable to infer that any observed differences in outcomes are likely attributable to the school VIP program.

TABLE 8

Characteristics of School VIP Participants and Matched Comparison Students in the 2022–23 School Year

Mean/share for each matching variable

	School VIP participants (n=96)	Matched comparison students (n=278)
Grade		
Grade 9	14%	14%
Grade 10	8%	8%
Grade 11	45%	45%
Grade 12	13%	9%
Race/ethnicity		
African American	51%	53%
Latino	39%	39%
Gender		
Girl	54%	54%
Boy	46%	46%
Academic characteristics		
Current weighted GPA	1.98	1.90
Total days absent	40	38
Special education	18%	13%
Attended multiple schools	11%	8%
Ever suspended	23%	23%

Source: Urban Institute analysis of data provided by the Oakland Unified School District.

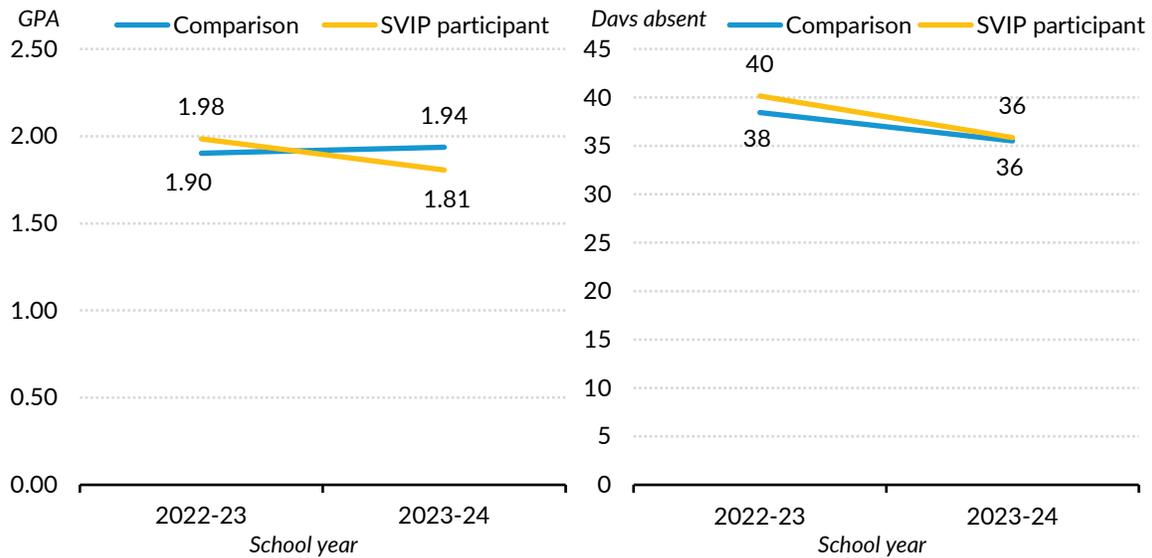
Notes: GPA = grade point average. VIP = violence intervention and prevention. 1 to 3 matching was used to increase the statistical power of the analysis and reduce variance in our estimates. Following the matching procedure, the two groups show no statistically meaningful differences, evidenced by a Cohen’s D effect size of under 0.2.

Regarding the characteristics of students included in our analysis, the school VIP participants had a weighted GPA just below a C average (1.98) and were absent from 40 days of school during the 2022–23 school year. This is equivalent of the California Department of Education’s definition of chronic absenteeism as being absent for 10 percent of the school year (California Department of Education 2023), or 18 days in a standard 180-day school year. Eighteen percent of students were in special education and 23 percent received at least one suspension during the school year. This indicates that the school VIP teams are serving students who may be facing challenges with academic performance, attendance, and school discipline.

Building upon this framework of the school VIP students and their matched comparison group, we employ a regression-based difference-in-differences analysis that assesses outcomes longitudinally across the 2022–23 and 2023–24 school years. The regression analysis allows us to control for differences between the school VIP participants and the comparison students that might bias the results. Figure 8 shows the results of the difference-in-differences results as line charts. The lefthand part of the figure shows that in both academic years, the school VIP participants and comparison students had very similar average GPAs, in the 1.8 to 2.0 range. The difference between years and

groups was not statistically significant. In terms of days absent, the school VIP participants and comparison students both experienced a decline from the 2022–23 to the 2023–24 school years. However, this difference was not statistically significant. Although not shown, the trend line for ever being suspended was similar, and not statistically significant. Table A.1 in the appendix has the detailed regression results.

FIGURE 8
Analysis Results of School VIP Service Participation on GPA and Days Absent



Source: Urban Institute difference-in-differences regression analysis of data provided by the Department of Violence Prevention and the Oakland Unified School District.

Notes: SVIP = school violence intervention and prevention.

To recap, our analyses did not reveal a significant impact of the school VIP program on the three outcomes. As a robustness check, we also examined the effects of school VIP services separately based on the school year in which participants started services (i.e., 2022–23 versus 2023–24). Consistent with the overall analysis, no statistically significant effects were observed for participants who started school VIP services in either school year. It is important to note that this analysis is limited by the small sample size and the recent implementation of school VIP teams in schools. More years of data, coupled with more participants and higher consent rates, would strengthen these analyses. Furthermore, better tracking of student ID numbers, names, and dates of birth would facilitate more successful linking to OUSD data to understand student characteristics and outcomes. Over 100 participants could not be linked to the OUSD data because of these data issues.

Given the limitations named above, we characterize these results as preliminary and inconclusive as to the overall impact of school VIP services on the outcomes of interest. Our qualitative research highlights some of the challenges and implementation learning and refinements of the early stages of the school VIP program, while also pointing to the potential to meaningfully impact student lives. For the final report, we will extend this analysis to include participants and outcomes from the 2024-25 academic year, which will strengthen the ability of the analysis to determine program impact.

Recommendations and Next Steps

Though still in its early stages, the Department of Violence Prevention's school violence intervention and prevention program demonstrates some promising signs in its work to meet the safety and security needs of students in the Oakland Unified School District. By considering the different needs of the OUSD high schools' student bodies, the DVP successfully identified schools with disproportionately high numbers of at-risk young people who stood to benefit most from the department's violence intervention and prevention activities. Students' access to and awareness of support services has increased, an awareness that is a crucial first step if school VIP teams are to achieve their goals of promoting community healing through life coaching, gender-based-violence services, and violence intervention services. As these school VIP teams continue their work at the seven OUSD high schools at which they operate, we will evaluate the extent to which their presence is leading to observable improvements in students' and teachers' perceptions of safety, student stability, academic success, and overall well-being.

Having reached over 500 OUSD students through direct services, life coaching and goal setting, and community events, the school VIP teams are already having a demonstrable effect. Pulling from firsthand staff interviews, outcome analyses of school VIP activities, and programmatic data on the full scope of services offered by the DVP's seven school VIP-focused grantees, we recognize early progress in the high rate of life goal completion, student satisfaction with available resources, and teacher-student alignment on the issues affecting student and family safety.

Still, each of these components of our initial analysis suggest areas for future growth. In this section, we present recommendations for practice and improving data collection and access to support evaluation work. These are synthesized from all the evaluation findings to date and focus on cross-cutting themes. They complement the more specific strategy- and activity-specific recommendations reported in the previous sections. We then summarize the next steps for this stage of the evaluation, which will be reflected in the final evaluation report delivered in mid-2025.

Recommendations

Practice Recommendations

Create forums for coordination and communication across services. One of the notable strengths of the DVP service continuum generally and the VIP services specifically is the degree of referral

relationships between service providers evident in the data and the level of partnership indicated across all the provider interviews. Coordination and communication across services and specialties is appreciated where it is happening, but how much it is happening varies. Many interviewees reported spending substantial time establishing and maintaining relationships needed to meet service participants' needs, and more formalized coordination might make this aspect of their work easier. Regular coordination might also help providers address emerging school-based trends related to patterns of violence or participant needs, as the shooting-review meetings do for providers who participate in them.

Deliver more cross-training of staff across organizations. Relatedly, many providers appreciated the opportunities they had to attend trainings with peers from other organizations and specialties, and felt the increased mutual understanding from those engagements supported better operational collaboration in the field.

Enhance housing and mental health service options. The gaps in options available to meet service participants' needs for housing and mental health services came up repeatedly. These are difficult and long-standing issues that interviewees consistently said are barriers to providing effective assistance to service participants.

Help providers increase capacity. Funded CBO providers wanted more assistance with building capacity from the DVP and from the City of Oakland generally. This could mean finding ways to increase staffing and staff capacity to mitigate challenges from staff turnover and vacancies; making the yearly grant process easier for grantees, who are often managing reporting requirements from multiple grants from multiple sources; and identifying additional funding sources for providers who are addressing complex needs and finding that the available resources, while needed and appreciated, remain insufficient relative to program participants' needs.

Data Recommendations

The City of Oakland and the DVP may want to revisit the process for requesting participants' consent to use their data for evaluation purposes, to determine whether there are ways to deliver necessary privacy protections while better supporting outcome analysis of the impact of DVP-funded services. The current process and resulting levels of consent (38 percent of school VIP service participants) significantly limit the ability to connect service engagement and outcomes beyond a small and potentially unrepresentative subset of participants. Findings on the impact of services on the subset of participants who consented to data sharing are valuable, but estimating the impact of those

services on safety and violence in the city as a whole requires going beyond understanding what is happening with that small subset. Of note, 42 percent of school VIP participants' consent forms are marked as "not complete yet" in the Apricot data system. Although the DVP has revised that form, offered trainings, and provided guidance about the consent process, providers and participants may be wary about the implications of granting consent. The DVP should explore the barriers service providers are encountering when presenting the consent form, while still communicating to participants that data sharing is voluntary.

More consistently and accurately capture dates of birth and names in the Apricot database, and consider whether additional identifiers could be added. Issues with this information made matching across data systems infeasible for many participants who had consented for evaluators to do so. Requiring that OUSD students' ID numbers be entered would facilitate linking to OUSD data to understand student outcomes.

Encourage providers to complete and update the forms in the Apricot data system more regularly and comprehensively, which will allow for a better understanding of participants' needs and levels of engagement with programming. For example, the participant and enrollment forms capture important information about education, housing, family, referral source, and exposure to violence, but many fields are not completed. Moreover, forms are inconsistently updated, and exit dates and reasons for exiting the school VIP program are missing for many students, making it difficult to measure completion rates or how long students participate in the programs.

Improve the integration of forms across the Apricot data system. Apricot is a comprehensive system with many forms specific to the different services funded by Measure Z. Some forms are based on the violence mediations or service provision but are not linkable back to participants, making analysis of service engagement more difficult. Further tracking of the schools where services and mediations occur would also be helpful.

Consider how Apricot could become a useful resource for providers. Many providers maintain their own separate databases and may not use Apricot for day-to-day case management or to track participants. Considering the breadth of the DVP network and the numbers of referrals across organizations, Apricot could become a useful resource as data tracking becomes more accurate and comprehensive.

Evaluation Next Steps

The next steps for Urban's evaluation are as follows:

- We will interview OUSD staff involved in the school VIP services. We will also invite more school VIP team members to participate in interviews to expand upon the sample included in this interim evaluation report.
- We will invite students engaged in school VIP services to participate in focus groups or interviews to better understand their experiences with the services.
- We will extend the quantitative analysis of the impacts of school VIP teams to include more data from the first half of the 2024–25 school year.

Appendix. Regression Results and Consent Rates

Regression Results

Table A.1 shows the results of our regression analyses. The bolded row shows the coefficient of interest that examines the effects of receiving school VIP services on three outcomes: academic performance measured by current GPA, student engagement measured by the number of days absent, and behavioral compliance measured by whether the student was ever suspended. The analysis revealed no statistically significant effects of participating in school VIP services on the three outcomes of interest.

TABLE A.1

School VIP Service Participant Difference-in-Differences Regression Results

	Current GPA	Days absent	Ever suspended
School VIP services	0.08 (0.16)	1.71 (3.83)	-0.00 (0.28)
2023-24	0.04 (0.11)	-2.93 (2.73)	-0.73*** (0.23)
SVIP Services x 2023-24	-0.21 (0.22)	-1.37 (5.41)	0.73 (0.41)
Constant	1.90***(0.08)	38.44*** (1.93)	1.21***(0.14)
Observations	751	754	754
Adjusted R-squared	0.003	0.001	-
AIC	-	-	739

Source: Urban Institute difference-in-differences regression analysis of data provided by the Oakland Department of Violence Prevention and the Oakland Unified School District.

Notes: GPA = grade point average. VIP = violence intervention and prevention. Ordinary least squares regression analysis was conducted for current GPA and total days absent outcomes. Logistic regression was conducted for the binary suspension outcome. Adjusted R-squared is reported for the linear regression models. AIC is reported for the logistic regression model.

Consent Rates

The rates at which participants consented to data sharing for the purposes of evaluation differed by strategy and activity. Table A.2 shows the consent rates for the school VIP team strategy and specific activities from July 2022 to June 2024 for participants who received at least one individual service session.

TABLE A.2

School VIP Participant Data Sharing Consent Rates

	Yes	No	Not complete yet	Missing	Total	Consent rate
Strategy						
School Violence intervention and prevention	209	101	231	3	544	38%
Activity						
School VIP community healing	10	13	36	0	59	17%
School VIP gender-based-violence services	45	51	159	0	255	18%
School VIP life coaching	140	13	27	3	183	77%
School VIP other	10	19	8	0	37	27%
School VIP violence interruption	8	5	5	0	18	44%

Source: Urban Institute analysis of Apricot data provided by the Oakland Department of Violence Prevention.

Note: VIP = violence intervention and prevention.

Notes

- ¹ Community & Youth Outreach closed in June 2024.
- ² For overall school student demographics, we used official California Department of Education data. For data on the services school VIP clients received, we relied on Apricot data collected by service providers. These data sources have slightly different categories for race and ethnicity, so they are not perfectly comparable.
- ³ “Suspension Data - Accessing Educational Data (CA Dept of Education),” California Department of Education, accessed October 4, 2024, <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ds/ad/filesd.asp>.
- ⁴ Quoted goals are real examples identified by students and life coaches that were added into the Apricot reporting system.
- ⁵ “High School,” Oakland Unified School District, accessed August 7, 2024, <https://www.ousd.org/select-a-school/high-school>.
- ⁶ “California Healthy Kids Survey,” California Department of Education, accessed August 7, 2024, <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/he/at/chks.asp>.
- ⁷ Data are not available for all questions for all school years. Any missing data for school years 2016–17 through 2022–23 are not available.
- ⁸ No data are currently available to measure teachers’ perceptions of student safety.
- ⁹ Correlation coefficient of 0.90.

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About the Authors

Jesse Jannetta is a senior policy fellow in the Justice Policy Center, where he leads projects on community violence interventions, local justice reform and decarceration, prison and jail reentry, and parole and probation supervision.

Sam Tecotzky is a research assistant in the Justice Policy Center at the Urban Institute, where he works on research and policy projects focused on prison conditions, reentry, and employment and education opportunities for people who have been involved in the criminal legal system.

Ashlin Oglesby-Neal is a senior research associate at the Urban Institute, where she leads mixed-methods process and outcome evaluations of justice programs and policies. Oglesby-Neal is skilled in large-scale data collection, causal analyses, and partnerships with local government, service providers, and law enforcement. Her research includes developing and validating assessment tools as well as evaluating the impact of treatment programs.

Maya Salcido White is a research associate for Urban Strategies Council, contributing to research and evaluation projects primarily focused on violence prevention in Oakland. White has over five years of experience conducting research and evaluation for nonprofit organizations, specifically in public education. White values community-based participatory research, the creation of accessible data sources for community members, and the inclusion of youth and elders in creating data-driven solutions.

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