

SAFE

Surrey Anti-Gang
Family Empowerment
Program





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Introduction

Surrey Anti-Gang Family Empowerment Program (SAFE)

Funded by a five-year \$7.5 million grant from Public Safety Canada, the Surrey Anti-Gang Family Empowerment Program (SAFE) represents an innovative, best practice approach to preventing and addressing youth gang involvement.

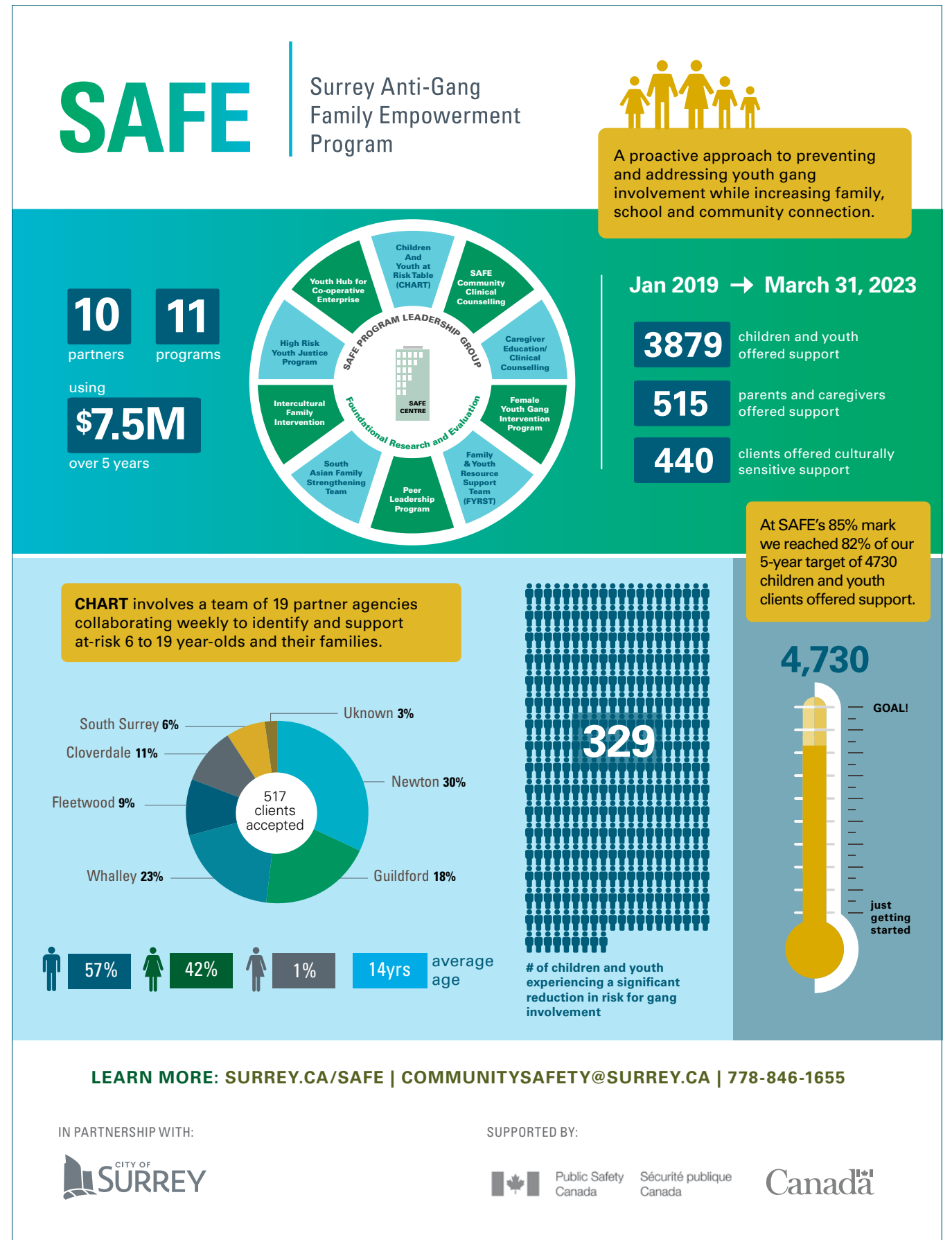
Led by the City of Surrey, SAFE is keeping children and youth out of gang life through a collaborative model that involves 10 multi-sectoral partners delivering 11 individual programs under one service umbrella. SAFE is now widely seen as a blueprint for municipally driven youth gang prevention projects.

SAFE programming supports children, youth and their loved ones by addressing risk factors, building positive life skills and strengthening connection with family, school and community. Services consider the unique needs of Surrey residents through gender, neighbourhood and culturally specific supports as appropriate.

Included on subsequent pages of this booklet are metrics, testimonials, success stories and images collectively demonstrating SAFE's positive impact. This doesn't tell the whole story as SAFE's approach has led to the development of several new programs that expand SAFE's reach and impact. Major enhancement projects include parent workshops, additional supports for high risk youth, and the Surrey Youth Resiliency Program that will allow the City and our partners to enhance prevention and intervention programs.

Strengthened resiliency experienced by clients participating in this network of services would not have been possible without the SAFE Program. SAFE is the foundation upon which Surrey's vital gang prevention programming is built.

The success stories profiled in this document are tableaus and do not reflect personal information about any individual SAFE client. Critical details have been changed to protect anonymity and respect participant experience.



SAFE Centre

Where it all happens...



The SAFE Centre is a physical space where SAFE Program governance, collaboration, reporting, and innovation is based.

It offers a variety of meeting spaces where community partners can coordinate and deliver services to tackle challenging issues and celebrate successes.

By the end of March 2023, the Centre had supported **11,484 visits across 960** functions such as meetings, workshops, focus groups, counselling sessions, and special events.

Several new initiatives enhancing the impact and reach of the SAFE Program have launched via the SAFE Centre including securing over \$4M in additional grants.

Oath of Collaboration

Here at the SAFE Centre collaborative hub, we believe working together is best practice. Each organization enriches the partnership by bringing unique expertise and experience.

We are committed to supporting young people in a collaborative way to help them build resiliency and strong social connections. Our goal is to intervene early and disrupt negative pathways of children and youth.

At SAFE, a person is not just their risk factors, everyone has protective factors and our programs aim to find and build upon those strengths.



Children & Youth At-Risk Table

The Children and Youth At-Risk Table (CHART) brings 19 multi-sectoral partners together on a weekly basis to implement tailored multi-agency intervention plans for 6 to 19-year-olds and their families.

Coordinated and chaired by the City of Surrey, CHART prioritizes client confidentiality by applying a structured process to discussing and accepting each situation. Only clients requiring more than one organization to support their unique needs are appropriate referrals. Each client is supported by a team of professionals typically representing 3-4 partner organizations which are determined by assessing the presence of up to 100 risk factors.

By the end of March 2023, CHART had accepted 517 situations. At this time, 71% of children and youth clients experienced a significant reduction in risk for gang involvement as a result of multi-agency interventions.

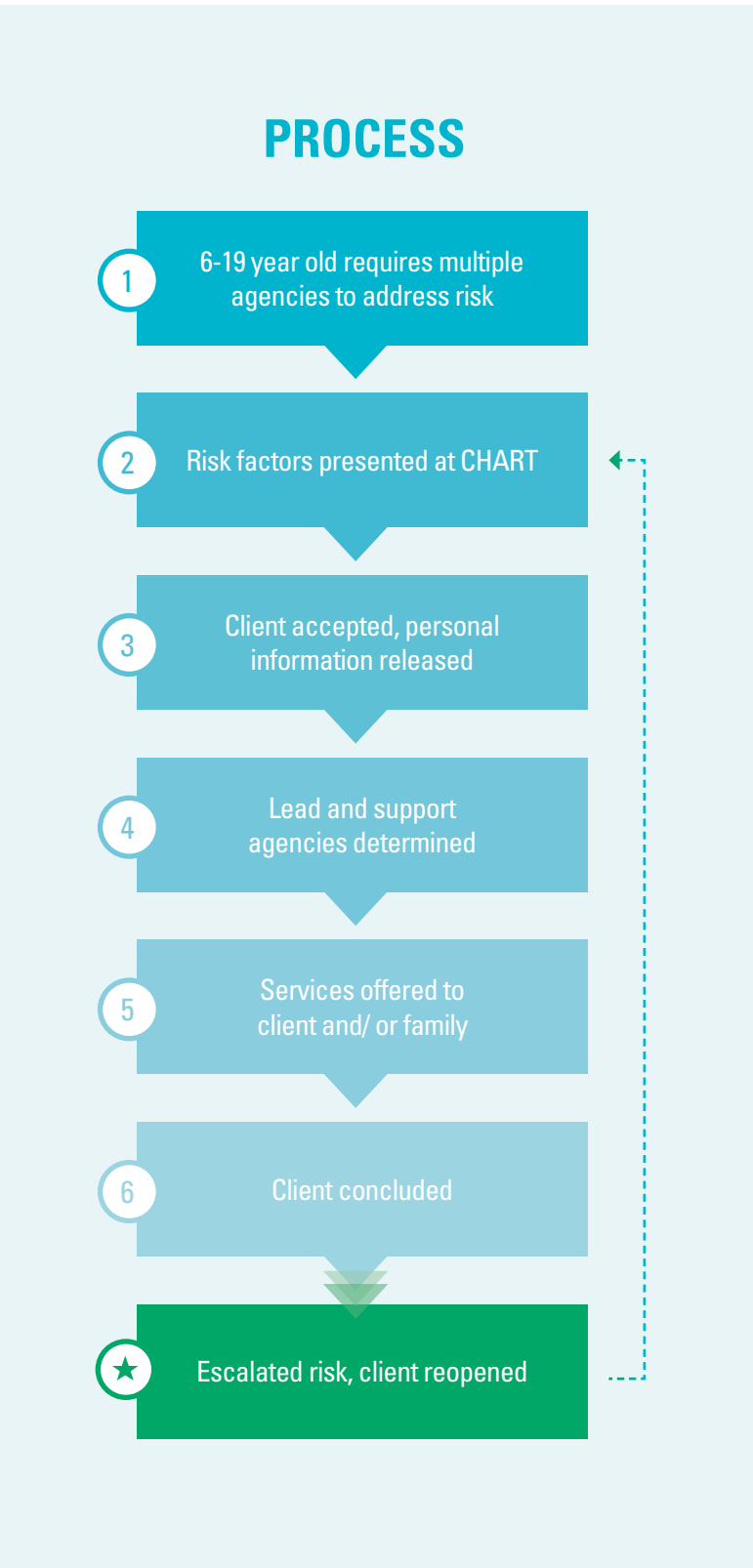
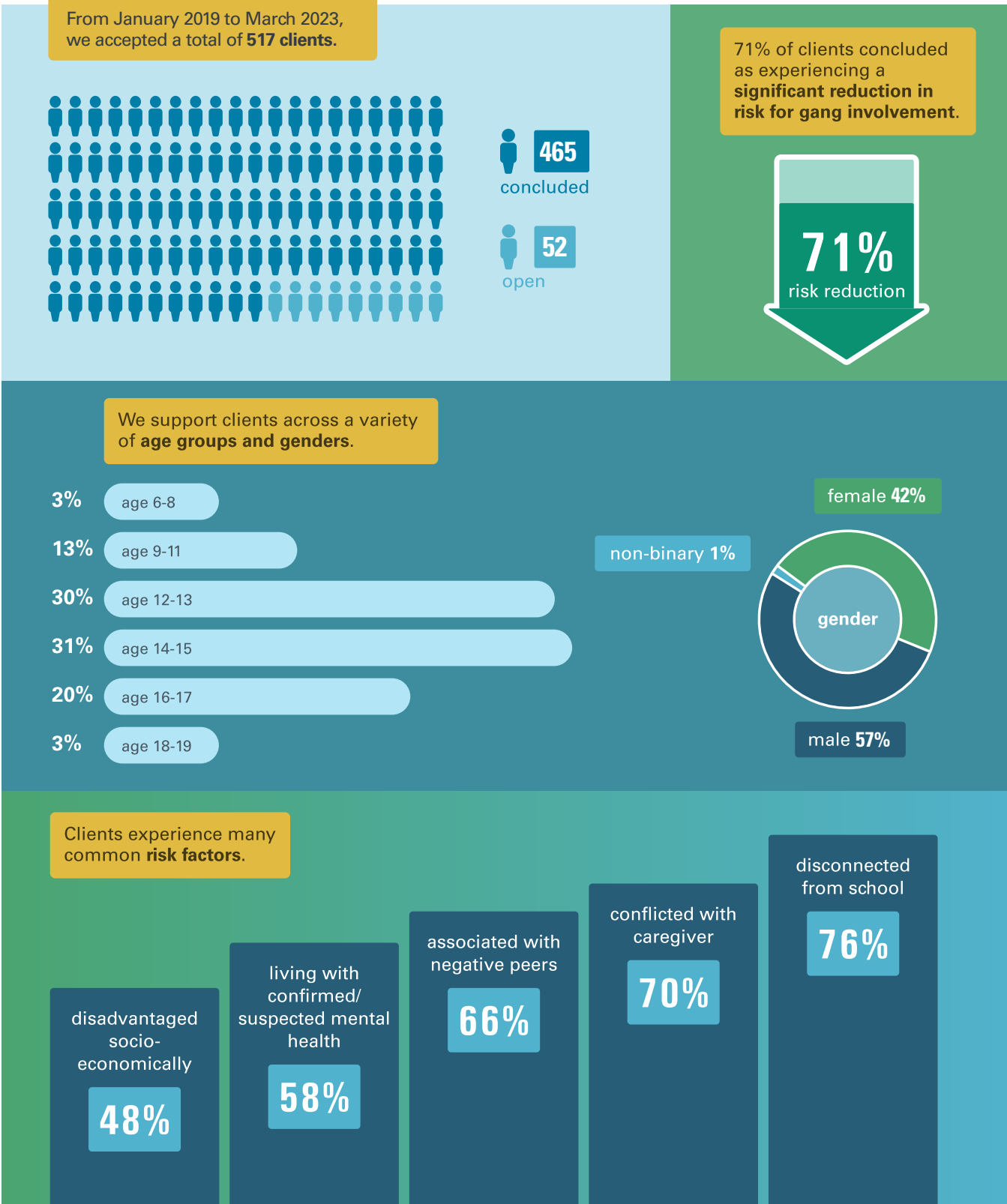


CHART Metrics



SAFE Community Clinical Counselling

DIVERSEcity Community Resources Society and Simon Fraser University deliver the SAFE Community Clinical Counselling program. Clients targeted are children and youth vulnerable for gang recruitment as well as their family members. Registered Clinical Counsellors as well as Master's level practicum student counsellors work one-on-one and in group formats to support youth and their caregivers to increase social-emotional skills, confidence, self-esteem and connection.

To reflect and support diverse needs, culturally sensitive counselling is provided in multiple languages.

SUCCESS STORY

JASMINE'S STORY

15 year-old Jasmine witnessed physical abuse at home leading to her father's incarceration. Soon after Jasmine's behaviour changed drastically. She started staying out late at night with older males who provided her with drugs and alcohol. She started bullying her peers and became violent toward others affecting her ability to stay in school. While enrolled at her third school site, her attendance plummeted. Concerned about the escalating risk including sexual exploitation, Jasmine's mother sought help from her school. Jasmine's case was accepted at CHART leading to connection

with a Female Gang Intervention worker as well as clinical counselling. Through counselling sessions Jasmine learned to regulate her emotions, build self-esteem, and establish achievable goals. It wasn't long before she was able to set healthy relationship boundaries, discontinued substance misuse, and ended relationships with high-risk peers and older males. As a result of the client-centered guidance offered through her therapeutic relationship with her counsellor, Jasmine reported feeling safer and more positively connected with her mother and school.

"This is the only place I feel like I belong. In our sessions I feel like I can be myself."

- SAFE Counselling Client 2023



Clinical Counselling & Caregiver Education Program



Through its Safe Schools department, the Surrey School District complements the SAFE Community Clinical Counselling program by placing a stronger emphasis on supporting parents and caregivers of children and youth currently involved or at-risk of involvement with gangs.

In-house and contracted Registered Clinical Counsellors support one-on-one and family counselling as well as provide group educational sessions to teach caregivers the art of applying practical home-based strategies rooted in Attachment Theory.

"I finally have somebody who cares about me and my family. I got positive energy from my counsellor to move forward with my life even though it is challenging. It was very important for me to have someone who understands my feelings and can support me in my preferred language."

- Parent client (translated to English)
 **This family was also supported financially by being connected to a weekly food hamper program.

Clinical Counselling & Caregiver Education Program places a stronger emphasis on teaching caregivers strategies on how to connect and communicate with their children.

Multiple languages supported



Peer Leadership Program



Surrey School District’s Peer Leadership Program (PLP) provides opportunities for high school students to mentor and build life skills for middle years youth in target communities with defined vulnerabilities. Mentors experience training before supporting a variety of activities including recreation and creative arts to help foster community belonging, build positive life skills and increase school attachment.

Mentors and mentees alike report fond appreciation for the opportunity to participate in PLP as mentors build leadership qualities while mentees experience a smoother transition to secondary school due to relationships established with their elder schoolmates.

Program Snapshot

Included in the suite of services offered by the Peer Leadership Program is Next 100 Years, a program delivered by Surrey Schools in partnership with Surrey RCMP. This program pairs secondary school youth mentors with elementary mentees to support presentations and activities. Mentors complete a week of training before leading classroom activities on themes including identity, culture, diversity, anti-racism, anti-oppression, sacrifice and community. Five schools are involved in this program including two secondary schools and three feeder elementary schools. The program also engages caregivers through evening sessions on topics affecting youth and the wider community.



Family & Youth Resource Support Team (FYRST)

Surrey RCMP's Family and Youth Resource Support Team (FYRST) intervenes with children and youth aged 9 to 13 that are showing early signs of criminal and/or gang involvement. It involves two youth counsellors and one Youth Section Constable providing proactive outreach to targeted children, youth and their families at school and in the community.



FYRST also supports education in local schools through a 4-part presentation series covering Healthy Conflict Management, Positive Decision Making, Social Media and Relationships, and Substance Use and Truancy.

A FYRST counsellor became aware of a group of children involved with negative behaviours such as bullying, violence and glorification of gang activity. Through collaboration with Surrey Schools, the counsellor discovered that several of these young people had an increased vulnerability for gang recruitment based on living with school designations as

well as older siblings affiliated with local gangs. This led the counsellor to form connections with them resulting in a boys group that was used to foster pro-social activities, mentorship, and positive interactions with police. FYRST also strategically targeted delivery of classroom presentations and parent nights to the school these boys attended.

Surrey RCMP's Family and Youth Resource Support Team (FYRST) does proactive outreach to youth that are showing early signs of gang involvement in schools and communities.



FYRST also supports education in local schools through a 4-part presentation series.



Female Gang Intervention Program (FGI)

Led by Pacific Community Resources Society, the Female Gang Intervention (FGI) Program provides intensive individualized trauma and relationship-based support to 12 to 19-year-old females that have experienced sexual exploitation, are engaged in unhealthy relationships, or are at-risk for gang recruitment and grooming. FGI works in tandem with PCRS' Stop Exploiting Youth program as well as a network of other professionals tasked with responding to confirmed or suspected sexual exploitation of youth.



Funny Farm

The Female Gang Intervention program forged a new partnership with the Funny Farm. This farm is a refuge for abandoned animals and creates a space for animals to connect with humans for loving, caring, and healing. Many of the animals at the farm come from difficult backgrounds which may include mistreatment, hunger, loneliness or neglect and caring for these animals created the conditions for FGI clients to open up to their FGI worker to set goals for a lifestyle free from gangs.



Project Magenta

The FGI program recognized that meaningful employment could provide protective factors for young women and girls entrenched in gang lifestyle. Project Magenta was created as a program enhancement to FGI to offer skill building and employment partnerships for gang exiting.



SUCCESS STORY

TAYLOR'S STORY

After 13 year-old Taylor was "love-bombed" for a week by a male she met online, she caved to pressure to share intimate images. She later regretted this decision and chose to disengage causing him to become aggressive. He figured out where she lived and threatened to share her images with her peers. Taylor became anxious and depressed refusing to attend school or even leave her home out of shame and fear that he would find her in the community. Law enforcement became involved confirming the male was an older adult living in the US that had a long list of sextortion victims. Taylor's situation was raised at CHART and, given PCRS having a pre-existing connection, FGI offered to take the lead. During CHART it was revealed that Taylor

lives with a special needs diagnosis that PCRS was not aware of. Equipped with this newfound knowledge, the worker was able to shift their client engagement approach. Through individualized support, Taylor eventually regained her confidence, resumed attending school, and started attending drop-ins at PCRS' youth hub. Taylor continues to struggle with anxiety and depression but has internalized the coping strategies she has learned through FGI participation. Taylor's FGI worker has also supported her to participate in the criminal justice proceedings of the perpetrator who is facing a multi-year prison sentence in the United States.

High Risk Youth Justice Program

Through its High Risk Youth Justice (HRYJ) program, Options Community Services brings together community service agencies, probation services and other agencies to deliver life skills training and support to children and youth.

HRYJ's two youth workers provide mentorship, education programs and monitoring services for children and youth involved with the criminal justice system as well as others at risk for criminal involvement. Workers support referrals to additional services such as crisis line, housing, life skills and employment programs. HRYJ can support families as needed with services available in English and Punjabi.

SUCCESS STORY

RAJAN'S STORY

Rajan's involvement with drug trafficking had caught up with him in more ways than one. While reporting to the Ministry of Children and Family Development for a probation order, Rajan received death threats over social media from a local gang due to a drug debt. Given the severity of the threat, Rajan's mother and siblings vacated the family home to stay with friends. Fearing for his safety, Rajan refused to leave the home and even began sleeping in the same bed as his father. MCFD requested that Options assist with coordinating a plan for the family. After assessing all risks, the family

and professionals agreed it would be safest for them to relocate outside of Surrey. Options helped the family identify an out of province destination where they could start fresh and then secured funds to pay for moving costs the family could not afford. A police escort to the borders of the lower mainland was also arranged to ensure the family set off safely. Options ensured the family arrived and was aware of services in their new home. This rapid planning and advocacy likely prevented a tragedy.



South Asian Family Strengthening Team

Options Community Services' South Asian Family Strengthening Team (SAFST) supports primarily South Asian families with two family counsellors fluent in Punjabi and sometimes other languages.

SAFST primarily supports caregivers of at-risk and gang-involved youth through a culturally sensitive approach that allows for outreach to the community including home visits.

Individual plans are developed for participants including activities such as developing life skills and tools to strengthen family connections. The program can support caregivers with clinical support as well as specifically support fathers in building stronger relationships with their children.

SUCCESS STORY

JAG'S STORY

18 year-old Jag did not feel connected at home or in the community. He felt empty and was targeted by a local gang to satisfy his need for belonging. It wasn't long before he was selling drugs through a dial-a-doping line. He even started using his own supply to cope with anxiety. Fearing for his future, Jag's parents reached out to Options seeking family and cultural support. Options staff worked with the family unit in a holistic way strengthening their connection over several months. Jag was disinterested at first but started to become involved in the sessions which led to him becoming

more comfortable at home because he felt loved and welcomed by his family. His worker taught him healthier ways to cope with anxiety such as working out and encouraged his re-engagement with school. Unfortunately, the gang wasn't willing to just let Jag walk away given what he knew. After receiving threats Jag was supported by his family to leave the country for a while. By the time he returned he was no longer on the gang's radar. He connected with his Options worker a few more times and is an example of someone who has successfully exited the gang lifestyle.



Intercultural Family Intervention Program

Progressive Intercultural Community Services (PICS) Society's Intercultural Family Intervention (IFI) program mobilizes an outreach worker to support immigrant and refugee families whose youth are struggling with negative behaviours or showing signs of gang involvement.

Participating families undertake a needs assessment and are referred to additional services as required such as paid job skills training programs offered by PICS. Support can be provided in multiple languages through a culturally sensitive approach with services delivered outside of standard working hours as needed to reduce client barriers.

SUCCESS STORY

NASSER'S STORY

17 year-old Nasser was referred to CHART by the Surrey School District after his teachers noticed an abrupt disengagement with school. He began associating with negative peers known to carry weapons and engage in violence. PICS was assigned as the lead CHART agency to provide one-on-one mentorship as well as support the family. The PICS worker discovered the family had high needs related to being newcomers and was able to provide conflict resolution, mediation, advocacy, goal planning, and practical assistance such as providing hampers and supporting with reporting income tax. Due to the trauma

experienced by the family as refugees, support was complex and lasted over 3 years. Nasser was connected to the PICS Intercultural Supports for Student Learning Program which provides paid training and certification in digital literacy, WHMIS, Serving It Right and other skills which also help to build confidence and self esteem. After successfully completing the program, Nasser also completed secondary school with his proud mother at the graduation ceremony. Nasser remains disconnected from negative peers and continues to strengthen pro-social connections through new employment opportunities.

Intercultural Family Intervention (IFI) supports immigrant and refugee families whose youth are struggling with negative behaviours through outreach workers who conduct a needs assessment to refer additional services.

Multiple languages supported

132
Total clients
Jan 2019 - March 2023

Youth Clients
male 68%
female 32%

82

Caregiver Clients
female 58%
male 42%

50

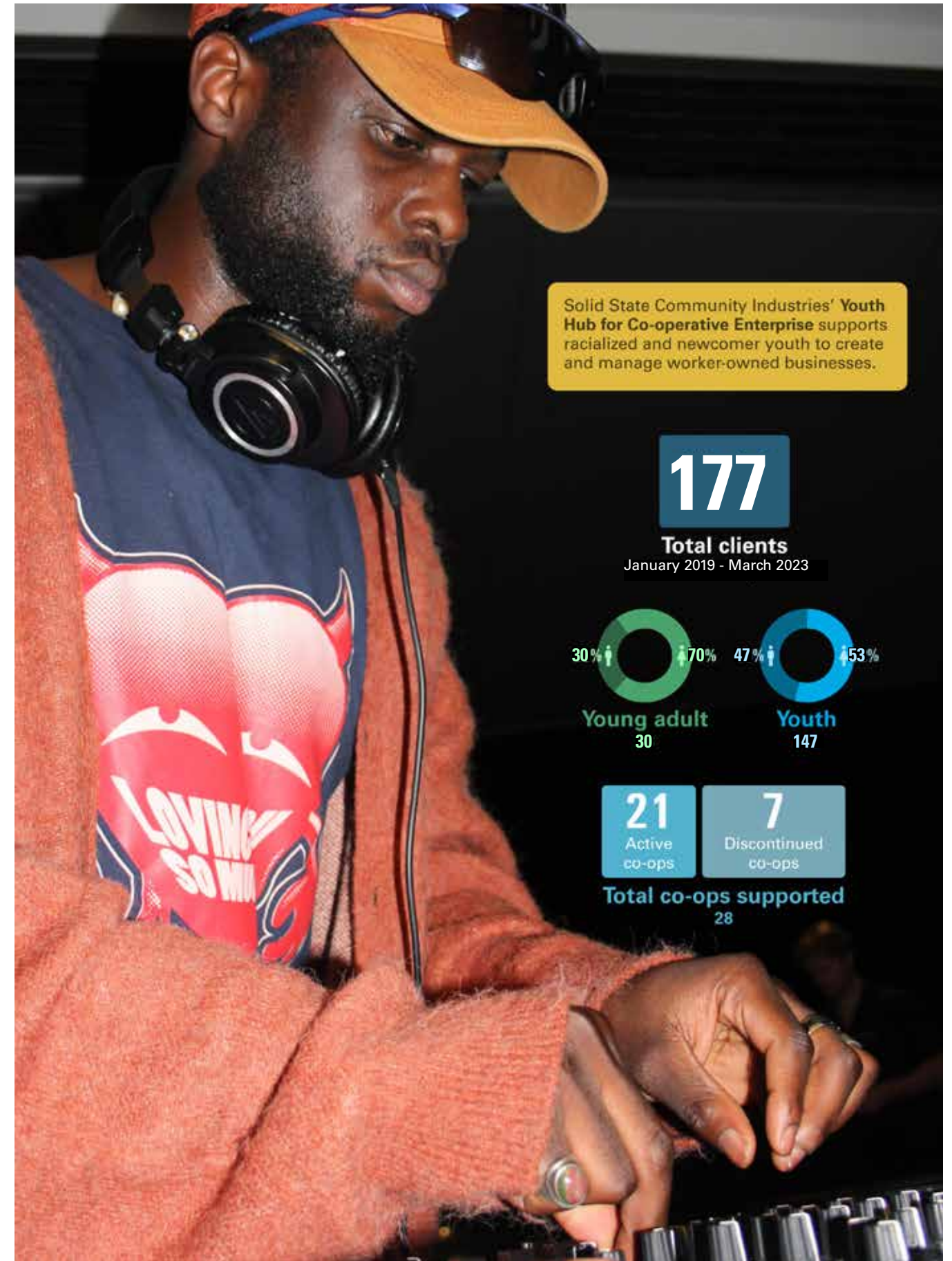
Youth Hub for Co-operative Enterprise



Solid State Community Industries' Youth Hub for Co-operative Enterprise supports racialized and newcomer youth to create and manage worker-owned businesses.

Like-minded youth are encouraged to operate their co-ops democratically through the Youth Hub which is a state-of-the-art fully renovated space outfitted with meeting and podcast rooms, computer terminals, lounge space, and even a commercial style kitchen that offers free meals daily.

Supporting 3 co-ops at program inception, nearly 30 have launched with some concluded participants expanding their independent businesses without further support from Solid State after reaching adulthood.



SAFE

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