



# Orange County Orange County Citizens Safety Task Force Update



## **BACKGROUND**

Following a series of violent incidents in the Fall of 2020, Orange County Mayor Jerry L. Demings formed the Orange County Citizens Safety Task Force. The purpose of the 37-member task force was to identify solutions and strategies to reduce crime and prevent gun violence in Orange County communities.

Once convened, the task force divided into four subcommittees – Prevention, Intervention, Enforcement and Prosecution – centered around strategic areas of emphasis.

The Board of County Commissioners accepted a comprehensive slate of recommendations from the Citizens Safety Task Force. Based on the holistic scope of these recommendations, Orange County has a cross-departmental team of staff who are diligently working to either directly implement or collaborate with community partners to advance these recommendations.

There have been significant efforts in this regard, which have leveraged the previously allocated budget for funding with additional county funding resources to invest in the recommended strategies.

The following summary highlights some of the activities that have been completed to date, or that are actively in progress. Recognizing that these are ongoing program investments designed to be sustained into the future, an additional budget of \$2M has been approved for this fiscal year (FY 22-23) to continue these efforts.



## **PREVENTION**

### **PREVENTION**

**Staff Contact: Angela Chestang, Manager, Citizens' Commission for Children Division, Community and Family Services Department**

#### **Neighborhood Center for Families Conference**

In Summer 2021, the Citizens' Commission for Children Division held the annual Orange County Neighborhood Center for Families Conference, themed "Co-Creating Health in the Community: An Act of Love." It included educational work sessions and focused on basic trauma informed practices. The event was in collaboration with Valencia College's Peace and Justice Institute.

#### **Positive and Adverse Childhood Experiences (PACES) Trainings**

Held a series of three Positive and Adverse Childhood Experiences (PACES) trainings. To date, Orange County has trained approximately 200 Citizens' Commission for Children Division staffers as well as a selection of the County's funded providers in trauma-informed practices. By the end of the series, the County plans to have trained more than 300 individuals. In addition to raising awareness and understanding of the impact of personal trauma on individuals, these workshops provided strategies for healing trauma and building personal resilience and provided avenues for engaging in broader resilience initiatives. The workshops were coordinated in partnership



Orange County

# Orange County Citizens Safety Task Force Update



with Valencia College's Peace and Justice Institute, the Creating a Resilient Community (CRC) Network, Orlando Health, and the Children's Advocacy Center.

## **Save Our Youth Program**

Established the Save Our Youth Program, which provided safe, structured summer-month weekend activities for at-risk youth in specifically targeted communities. Following the successful launch of this program in the Summer of 2021, it was expanded for two additional years. During the Summer of 2022 alone, this program hosted over 40 events with more than 1,000 local youths attending. Established in partnership with the Boys and Girls Club of Central Florida and Orange County's faith-based community, this program initially offered events in Apopka, Carver Shores, Pine Hills, and Winter Garden. After its initial success, the Save Our Youth Program was expanded to the communities of Bithlo, Goldenrod, and Parramore.

## **Enhanced Focus Areas for Children's Services Fund**

Incorporated "Youth Violence Prevention" as a new focus area and expanded the "Life Skills Training and Development for Youth" focus area for investment of the Children's Services Fund. The funding is allocated to nonprofit organizations to implement programs through the Citizens' Review Panel Fund Distribution Process and increase use of grassroots organizations in provision of services. The County solicited a fiscal agent in the Spring 2022 Children's Services Fund Distribution Process. The fiscal agent was required to collaborate with a minimum of three grassroots organizations – through sub-award agreements – to provide year-round programming related to youth violence prevention.

## **New Trainings for Nonprofits**

Approved the investment of funds to provide trainings to nonprofit organizations to increase therapeutic practices throughout Orange County. Proposed training topics include The Modular Approach to Therapy for Children with Anxiety, Depression, Trauma, or Conduct Problems (MATCH) Learning Collaborative, Parent-Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT), Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC), Child Parent Psychotherapy (CPP), Family Systemic Therapy/Parenting with Love and Limits (PLL), Cognitive Behavioral Therapy, Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT), and Trauma-Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. Over 100 clinicians and clinical supervisors have enrolled in the MATCH and Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TF-CBT) training cohorts since recruitment began in October 2021. Recruitment has begun for the 50 Family Systems Trauma (FST) training slots with over 30 representatives from community organizations attending an orientation conducted in early 2022.

## **Capacity Building Seminar Programs**

Expanded the size and scope of Orange County's two Capacity Building Seminar programs. Conducted by Rollins College and the University of Central Florida (UCF), these two programs work to strengthen internal operations for small, local nonprofits that may seek Orange County



# Orange County Orange County Citizens Safety Task Force Update



grant funding to further their organization's missions. By assisting local nonprofits to increase their organizational capacity, these two programs — facilitated by U.C.F.'s Center for Public and Nonprofit Management and Rollins' Edyth Bush Institute for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Leadership — ensure that Orange County taxpayers receive a premium return on investment through the County's grant funding. The first cohort of students from both programs graduated in the Summer of 2022.

## **Community Improvement Projects**

Improved neighborhood conditions within targeted zip codes through the completion of the following community improvement projects:

- Completed more than 135 demolitions of blighted and unsafe buildings as well as more than 380 lot cleanings.
- Awarded more than 20 neighborhood beautification and sustainable communities grants.
- Implemented 13 safe-neighborhood projects (i.e., signs, community newsletters, aesthetic enhancements).
- Conducted 15 neighborhood cleanup projects with approximately 500 volunteers.



INTERVENTION

## **INTERVENTION**

**Staff Contact: Tracy Salem, Deputy Director, Community and Family Services Department**

## **Supporting Neighborhood Accountability Boards**

In partnership with the Ninth Judicial Circuit, Orange County provided curriculum and training supplies for the Neighborhood Accountability Boards. This endeavor included collaborating with Practice Technology, Inc., the Bureau for At-Risk Youth, and the Arise Foundation. The Neighborhood Accountability Boards currently operate in the Orange County communities of Apopka, Maitland, Ocoee, and Winter Garden.

## **Public Information Officer, Community and Family Services**

Created a position to ensure the community is kept broadly informed of the programs, resources and services provided by Orange County. This professional communications position aids in drafting clear, concise messaging to enlighten the community. The Public Information Officer works within the Community and Family Services Department. A social media platform will be created along with a user-friendly website that lists the vast number of resources within



# Orange County Orange County Citizens Safety Task Force Update



the Community and Family Services Department. The Public Information Officer came aboard in Summer 2022.

## **Credible Messenger Program**

Launched Orange County's Credible Messenger Program, a unique mentoring initiative to Florida. A credible messenger is a "street wise" individual who works directly with underserved and disenfranchised youth. Orange County is the first region or county to implement the Credible Messenger Program in Florida. The program has been linked with decreased youth-crime statistics and reduced juvenile repeat-offender rates in several major U.S. cities, including New York City and Washington, D.C. To oversee this program, Orange County hired a credible messenger consultant, who has since trained more than 20 Orange County credible messengers.

## **Youth Programs in Community Centers**

The Community Action Division has partnered with a nonprofit organization to provide mentorship programs and life skills trainings for youth within Orange County community centers. A multicultural center as well as a new community center in Tangelo Park are being developed. The Citizens' Commission for Children Division is also reaching out to youth through resource fairs. These endeavors seek to create deliberate, large-scale spaces that encourage positive interactions for Orange County youth.

## **Revised Funding Strategy for Nonprofits**

During the Spring 2022 Citizens' Review Panel Fund Distribution Process, the Citizens' Commission for Children Division implemented a revised funding strategy to create a more equitable process. This revised strategy ensured limited competition for some community-based programming opportunities, allowing smaller and mid-sized nonprofits to compete for funding separate from larger organizations. During the Spring 2022 allocation meeting, 30 nonprofit agencies were awarded funding to implement 59 separate programs for Orange County citizens. These programs will begin service delivery in January 2023. Thirteen of the 30 nonprofit agencies awarded funding, representing 43-percent of the awarded agencies, were small nonprofits that had not received funding from the Citizens' Review Panel, previously.

## **Implemented Measures to Ensure Quality Funding**

The Citizens' Commission for Children Division funds programs based on community needs. These needs are identified by various measures of assessment, including research studies, community meetings, etc. The advisory board for the Citizens' Review Panel – which consists of citizen volunteers – is responsible for providing recommendations for programs and services that are credible. The Citizens' Commission for Children Division employs a comprehensive quality assurance strategy – which includes desk reviews, monthly, quarterly, and annual monitoring – to ensure that funded programs and services are meeting contractual standards. Funding is released on a cost reimbursement basis to ensure service delivery. Training is provided by the Citizens' Commission for Children Division throughout the year and especially





# Orange County Orange County Citizens Safety Task Force Update



during the fund distribution cycle. Training is held in-person, virtually, and via pre-recordings. The recorded trainings were placed online, and live Q&A Sessions were provided.

## **Youth Violence Prevention Services**

During the Spring 2022 Citizens' Review Panel Fund Distribution Process, the Citizens' Commission for Children Division contracted with an external specialist to spearhead youth-violence prevention services throughout Orange County. This was the first time this had been done in Orange County. The contract incorporated a sub-recipient model, requiring the award recipient to collaborate with three smaller nonprofit organizations to fulfill the contracted goals.

## **Collaborative Trainings**

The Citizens' Commission for Children Division collaborated with the Mental Health and Homelessness Division to provide family-enhancement trainings to nonprofit agencies. Among other training programs, these sessions included infant and early childhood mental health consultation, child-parent psychotherapy, parent-child interaction therapy, and family systems training. In addition, the Division solicited additional counseling services through the Spring 2022 Citizens' Review Panel Fund Distribution Process. The solicitation included the requirement to provide services during nontraditional hours.

## **Marketing and Promotions of Services**

The Citizens' Commission for Children Division spearheaded a range of efforts to publicize and raise awareness of their services. Among other efforts, the Division created a resource directory – which is housed on its website – for the public to search for agency services and locations. This online directory will be updated as new programs and providers are identified. Additionally, the Division hosted a nonprofit mixer that focused on recruiting, retaining, and developing agencies on providing after-school services. Representatives from the YMCA of Central Florida and the Boys & Girls Clubs of Central Florida were the keynote speakers. A video to recruit, retain and develop agencies is in development.



## **ENFORCEMENT**

**Staff Contact: Anthony Watts, Deputy Chief, Corrections Department**

### **Community Ambassador**

Orange County created a position within the Neighborhood Services Division to actively engage the community, serving as a liaison between law enforcement agencies and the citizens they serve. This professional is charged with spearheading efforts to reduce gun violence and violent crime, coordinates community town halls, and assists in identifying challenges and opportunities to collaborate with law enforcement and community stakeholders. After an extensive search, the role was filled in Summer 2022.



# Orange County Orange County Citizens Safety Task Force Update



## **Mental Health Response Team**

To reduce the overutilization of incarceration for individuals in a mental health crisis, the Orange County Sheriff's Office and the Orlando Police Department have developed a series of interventions as alternatives to incarceration. Implementation of these strategies is intended to create a safer community by providing needed assistance to those experiencing mental health crisis, thus reducing the probability of engaging in violent crimes. Both law enforcement agencies report success with their respective mental health response teams and continue to market the program and their success.

## **Law-Enforcement Partnerships**

Facilitating communication with the Orange County Sheriff's Office and the Orlando Police Department to discuss vision for community town halls (frequency, points of contact, etc.). The nine specified zip codes will be utilized to determine and prioritize town hall locations.



Prosecution

## **PROSECUTION**

**Staff Contact: Juanita Beason, Manager, Inmate Administration Services Division, Corrections Department**

### **Adult Civil Citation Diversion Program**

Pursuant to Florida Statute 901.41, this pre-arrest diversion program affords certain adults who fulfill specified intervention and community service obligations the opportunity to avoid an arrest record. The State Attorney's Office – in partnership with the Orange County Sheriff's Office, the Orlando Police Department and Kissimmee Police Department – launched the pilot Adult Civil Citation Diversion Program in the Ninth Judicial Circuit. The program graduated its first participant in Summer 2022. To date, nearly 60 referrals have been reported. The program opens to all law enforcement agencies in both Orange and Osceola Counties in January 2023.

## **Geographic Stewards**

A community prosecution model, where prosecutors – who live within the communities where they practice – partner with the community and law enforcement agencies to reduce crime and improve the quality of life for local citizens. Keeping with the sentiment of community policing, community prosecuting has the potential to reduce crime, increase public trust and create impactful partnerships. The State Attorney's Office and the U.S. Attorney's Office continue to work towards realizing this recommendation.