

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT PLAN

GOAL 1.3 LISTENING SESSIONS



Summary: December 3, 2020 Violence Prevention Partnership Community Partners

On December 3, 2020 Santa Rosa Mayor Tom Schwedhelm, Chief of Police Rainer Navarro, Community Engagement Director Magali Telles, Community Engagement Coordinator Danielle Garduño, and Community Outreach Specialist Gustavo Mendoza met with eight (8) community partners from the Santa Rosa Violence Prevention Partnership for a listening session and dialogue.

Listening Sessions and Discussion Questions

Law Enforcement Specific Questions

1. What does it mean to feel safe in your community and how does that look?

- One participant mentioned that while as a youth safety was not much of an issue, times have changed and there is much more going on in the community. She stated that she believes parents should be talking to their kids about these issues of safety, but it is difficult, as there are many barriers including multiple jobs, lack of resources, etc.
- There is a lack of safe spaces for kids to go to. These spaces should be enticing and provide something for them to do.
- Vulnerabilities youth in south west Santa Rosa are exposed to on campus or on the way to school, as well as at home, are at times not safe:
 - Many students experience no sense of safety
 - Students are left unattended and unsupervised
 - There are not many places that that provide a sense of safety
 - There needs to be a place outside of school that embraces and engages youth. An example of this is Bayer Neighborhood Park and Farm
- Safety is being able to meet my and my family's basic needs, like food, shelter, stability for underserved communities, and not being exposed to COVID-19
 - Access to wholesome food
 - Access to resources if you aren't low-income during this time
 - Services for undocumented residents
 - Language access
 - Shelter was brought up several times by several different participants as being part of feeling safe.
- "Parents are the first teachers of youth. Parenting is key to safety."

2. What has your overall experience been like with the Santa Rosa Police Department (SRPD)?

- Several participants mentioned their experiences with SRPD is a mix of both positive and negative instances.
- One participant mentioned that most of his experience with SRPD comes from his 11+ years with his school site:
 - Negative – Some officers don't know how to speak to parents and youth. "It's sad because we need that connection with SRPD and it's why youth are not trusting of police."
 - Positive – Some officers are great at being human when interacting with kids and parents. "I would love to have a SRO [school resource officer] at my school, but we need to have a conversation about their roles and duties and what that would look like."
- Another participant mentioned that her most recent experience with a SRPD officer was great, but she also sees that the youth are not connected with the officers. "I would like to see more engagement with students and at a much younger age."
 - Participant also mentioned that students need to learn that their experience with officers at school may be different than out in the community, depending on the situation.
 - She stated that marginalized communities have more negative experiences with officers.
 - Her experiences as a youth were negative and also mentioned what she currently observes with the youth she works with: it's difficult to have a stable interaction with SRPD because we can't control what happens outside school. It creates a sense of opposition.
- Another participant mentioned that he has had to do a great deal of self-reflection and work on his own experiences with SRPD. He states that he has youth to support through his work but his own experiences and the recent experiences in the community involving SRPD make his job more difficult.
 - He states that there needs to be more training for SRPD when working with youth
 - There should also be more opportunities for mentorship between officers and youth

- He would also like to see more engagement and support from officers early on, so that there is more time to build that trust and relationships with younger children.
- Another participant weighed in, stating that she does not think there should be more interactions with the SRPD. She also stated that she does not think that there should be school resource officers in the schools. She has never had a good experience with an officer and also has seen what students have experienced recently in the community with the SRPD.
 - She believes that there needs to be an interruption in the experience of not only youth, but also with their family members.
 - These interruptions should be positive interactions with police officers, but it is not on the community to change the behavior and thoughts of the police officers. It is on the institution and includes things like providing officers with cultural sensitivity training and power dynamics/power and privilege training – what power and authority does to communities that don't have any authority or power.
- “Majority of my experiences have been negative.”

3. What ideas do you have in strengthening relationships with the police?

- Relationships need to stem from a point of humility. Relationships are important.
- Having officers do the outreach to build positive relationships with the community. They need to ask themselves, as a police officer, what can I do to build those relationships and positive interactions with the community?
- Community policing is important – have officers get out of their cars and walk around the neighborhood and talk to the community members.
 - One participant brought up the movie *Colors* as an example of what community policing looks like – officer has relationship with youth and other community members, gets out of his car, talks with them about what they are doing and encouraging them to find other activities to get involved with.
- Small events to engage the community.
- Expose officers to the history of systemic racism nationally and locally. Education as to why and how this impacts our BIPOC communities.
 - The institution needs to acknowledge the history of wrongdoing.

- “There needs to be accountability. It’s hard to justify the work you are doing when law enforcement interactions continue to be negative.”
- “I believe that officers dismiss the importance of these trainings.”
- “I don’t think it’s a good idea to have younger kids around cops. Ethnic Studies with a Cop is not a good idea. The City needs to acknowledge the program isn’t working.”