



# Baybrook Violence Reduction Initiative: Evaluating the Chosen Leaders Intensive Life Coaching Approach for Youth

## EVALUATION REPORT

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MARYLAND CRIME RESEARCH  
AND INNOVATION CENTER

## About MCRIC

This document was prepared by the Maryland Crime Research and Innovation Center (MCRIC) at the University of Maryland. MCRIC engages in research to inform local, state, and national crime reduction strategy and policy through data-driven scholarship by conducting rigorous interdisciplinary basic and applied research, developing and evaluating innovative criminal justice strategies aimed at reducing crime in the state, leveraging cross-agency networks to foster data integration, and actively engaging in translational science through wide and varied dissemination of research. MCRIC leverages the broad range of expertise at the University of Maryland to engage in innovative research and interdisciplinary projects to enhance community safety and inform data-driven decision making. MCRIC works with a variety of partners including communities and community-based organizations, police and practitioners, lawmakers, academic peers, and industry, to promote data sharing, exchange knowledge and best practices, and develop new approaches.

## About the Project

This is the final evaluative report for the Greater Baybrook Community-based Violence Intervention project. The research was funded by the United Way of Central Maryland, Inc. The views and conclusions contained in this document are those of the authors and should not be interpreted as representing the views of the City of Refuge Baltimore or the University of Maryland.

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# Executive Summary

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The Maryland Crime Research and Innovation Center (MCRIC) has been a research partner in the Greater Baybrook region (including Brooklyn, Curtis Bay, and Brooklyn Park neighborhoods) since 2020. This report builds on prior research conducted in Phase 1 of the Chosen Leaders Intensive Life Coaching Program, which engaged 33 youth to explore their experiences, perceptions, and ideas for programming. Phase 2 of the research aimed to continue this work by engaging additional youth to examine how participation in intensive life coaching may have impacted their lives, while also further exploring youth perspectives on resources, opportunities, and programming needs. The current report summarizes findings from Phase 2, which involved the second cohort of youth-focused intensive life coaching delivered to youth ages 15-18 in the Baybrook community.

## Youth-focused Interventions

The Chosen Leaders program, delivered by the City of Refuge Baltimore (CORB), is designed to provide at-risk youth with mentorship, resources, and support to achieve self-identified goals, foster prosocial relationships, and meet traditional markers of healthy development, such as school completion. The program is grounded in a public health framework, emphasizing mental and behavioral health as key deterrents to involvement in risky behavior.

Youth were recruited to participate in interviews lasting roughly 45 minutes, sharing their personal experiences in the Baybrook community, their engagement with programming, and ideas for additional opportunities. Despite targeted recruitment efforts informed by Phase 1, only 12 youth completed interviews in Phase 2. Recruitment challenges limited the breadth of findings and constrained the ability to draw conclusions about program outcomes. However, the insights collected can still offer valuable guidance for understanding youth needs and priorities in this community.

## Key Findings

Analysis of the interviews revealed a number of important insights about the characteristics, strengths, and needs of youth participants in the Baybrook community. Key takeaways include:

- **Youth in this sample generally reflected a lower-risk profile than might be typically expected for the target “high-risk” population.** Many reported being college-bound, holding ambitious academic or career goals, and expressing optimism about their future. Even if they were unclear on the pathways to achieving those goals. Participants consistently described feeling that they were better off than the previous year and anticipated continued improvement over time. Several also expressed a desire to help peers by sharing lessons from their own experiences, reflecting prosocial attitudes and motivation to give back to their communities.
- **Youth exhibited strong aspirations but also significant need for structured guidance and accessible supports.** Many articulated ambitious educational and career goals, yet were often unclear about the concrete steps required to achieve them. Participants described difficulty finding opportunities or resources on their own and emphasized that information about academic, career, and basic-needs resources are frequently difficult to locate.

- **Strong connections with family, friends, and trusted adults emerged as a central support system for participants.** Youth described these relationships as critical to their sense of safety, well-being, and decision-making, often shaping their behaviors and perceptions of risk. Social ties were consistently cited as the primary determinant of perceived safety, influencing how youth navigated their communities and avoided potentially unsafe situations.
- **Youth described safety in nuanced ways.** Safe areas were typically quiet, familiar, indoors, and low-activity, while outdoor spaces were sometimes seen as chaotic or unpredictable. Environmental features, including lighting, cameras, and police presence, were noted as factors that contributed to a sense of security. Nighttime and unfamiliar areas remained sources of concern, prompting youth to use proactive strategies for navigation and risk avoidance.
- **Youth reported strong interest in participating in structured and informal activities,** including sports, music, arts, and clubs. However, barriers such as transportation, cost, and limited local availability constrained participation. Participants also identified skill gaps and developmental needs, including time management, financial literacy, communication skills, and access to basic resources such as identification and driver's education.
- **Many participants demonstrated self-awareness regarding their emotions** and the importance of managing them effectively. Youth expressed a desire for additional outlets and programming to support emotional regulation, reflecting both maturity and a need for spaces to explore challenges, reflect, and build resilience.

## Recommendations

Based on these findings, the following recommendations are offered to strengthen programming and support for youth in Baybrook:

1. **Develop tailored programming aligned with youth interests and goals,** particularly in music, arts, sports, and other creative or skill-building activities.
2. **Enhance accessibility** by addressing barriers such as transportation, cost, and scheduling.
3. **Provide skill-building and preparatory programming** for college, career, and life management, including time management, financial literacy, communication, and guidance on navigating essential resources.
4. **Improve access to opportunities for youth,** by creating a centralized, youth-friendly resource hub and pairing it with proactive outreach so that information about academic, career, and basic-needs resources are easy to find and use.
5. **Offer safe spaces for emotional expression and support,** with flexible modalities to accommodate both group-based and individual preferences.
6. **Address environmental and structural safety concerns,** including improved lighting, cameras, and creation of low-activity, predictable spaces where youth can feel secure.
7. **Strengthen social networks and mentorship opportunities,** leveraging relationships with peers, family, and adults to support resilience and well-being.
8. **Expand outreach to higher-risk youth,** recognizing that this cohort primarily engaged high-need but low-risk participants, and that their needs may differ substantially from those at elevated risk for violence or justice system involvement.

## Conclusion

Although recruitment challenges limited the number of participants and constrained conclusions about program outcomes, the findings provide valuable guidance for future program design and delivery. Youth participants in Baybrook and the surrounding areas demonstrate resilience, motivation, and strong social supports, while highlighting gaps in accessible programming, skill development, and safe spaces. Elevating youth voices is critical to ensure that programs are responsive, engaging, and effective in supporting young people to achieve their goals, strengthen their communities, and thrive in high-need environments. By addressing both individual and structural needs, interventions can be better positioned to foster meaningful opportunities, promote well-being, and engage youth at varying levels of risk.

For access to the full report, please contact [MCRIC](#).





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