

# SUPPORTING COMMUNITY SAFETY AND HEALING

A Public Health Approach to Community Safety  
and Healing in Oakland and Alameda County

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**ASIAN HEALTH SERVICES**

HEALTH CARE FOR ALL. ADVOCACY FOR THE UNDERSERVED.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>About This Report .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Summary of Policy Recommendations .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Forward .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Adopting a Public Health Approach to Violence .....</b>	<b>12</b>
Social Determinants of Safety .....	13
<b>Policy and Systems Change Recommendations.....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Sharing What Works.....</b>	<b>24</b>
Healing Together: Insights from the Asian-Black Racial Healing Research Project .....	26
Key Findings on Violence and Community Impacts .....	29
The Power of Community-Based Solutions to Create Healing and Safety: AHS Stop the Hate Program.....	34
<b>Conclusion: Future Directions .....</b>	<b>38</b>





# ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report aims to address the systemic issues of violence experienced by Asian Americans and other low-income communities of color in the City of Oakland and Alameda County. By adopting a public health approach to community safety, this report provides a comprehensive set of policy and systems change recommendations to address violence and enhance community safety and healing.

The report also demonstrates the practical application and effectiveness of the proposed policies, highlighting successful community-led initiatives that emphasize cross-racial solidarity, holistic healing and comprehensive community-based solutions.

# SUMMARY OF POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

## **Recommendation #1: Increase access to mental health services, victim services, and holistic healing for victims, justice-involved, and at-risk individuals and families.**

- 1.1 Address gaps in the continuum of care for victim services programs by supporting complementary healing interventions, such as lay counseling, peer relationship-building, support groups, and healing circles.
- 1.2 With the loss of mental health prevention funding through Prop. 1, Alameda County must preserve the preventive mental health programs that are vital to violence prevention strategies.
- 1.3 Support culture and arts-based healing programs that promote violence prevention and empower impacted communities to take action towards healing.

## **Recommendation #2: Invest in comprehensive community violence prevention.**

- 2.1 Broaden and sustain funding for community violence intervention programs that intervene and de-escalate violent conflicts and provide supportive services.
- 2.2 Support and replicate proven community ambassador and mediator programs that have successfully fostered safe neighborhoods through building relationships between community members, businesses, and unhoused individuals, de-escalating conflicts, and beautifying the streets and sidewalks.
- 2.3 Provide initial capital investments and funding for supportive services that enhance the safety and well-being of seniors, focusing on reducing isolation, preventing abuse, and improving street safety.
- 2.4 Support and expand education and other reentry services for justice-involved youth in Alameda County by removing barriers to education and job opportunities.

## **Recommendation #3: Improve language access, cultural competency, and data collection to engage a broader, more diverse population about safety and violence prevention.**

- 3.1 Pass an Alameda County language access ordinance to provide interpretation and translation services, assign dedicated staff to manage language access issues, develop language access plans and reports, and disseminate in-language information through ethnic media channels.



- 3.2 Partner with community-based organizations and community health centers that have language access and cultural competency expertise to provide victim services and violence prevention.
- 3.3 Develop a community-driven dashboard with alternative metrics that go beyond crime statistics, allowing diverse communities to define safety and track their own measures of safety, informed by their cultural and lived experiences.

### **Recommendation #4: Prioritize racial equity, multiracial collaboration, and alliance building as violence prevention strategies.**

- 4.1 City of Oakland and Alameda County should convene multiracial, multi-generational stakeholders to address gaps in the violence prevention and victims' support ecosystem using a public health framework.
- 4.2 Invest in community empowerment for victims of violence, including systems-impacted individuals, e.g., experiential learning, community-building programs, and cultural exchanges.

### **Recommendation #5: Make deep investments in a comprehensive public health framework for violence prevention, prioritizing the social determinants of safety such as safe neighborhoods, public spaces, educational opportunities and affordable housing.**

- 5.1 Prioritize deeply affordable and permanent supportive housing, rental assistance, and greater enforcement of tenant protections and utilities assistance.
- 5.2 Prioritize resources for school-based health centers and orient their mission and processes towards community safety and healing.
- 5.3 Provide resources and incentives to small businesses for graffiti abatement, storefront improvements, community art installations, and the creation of community gathering spaces.
- 5.4 Prioritize a City of Oakland Parks Master Plan to make a thriving parks system for all Oakland and Alameda County residents.

# FORWARD

**These past few years have been marked by extraordinary strength and resilience as our communities recover and heal from the profound impacts of COVID-19, which has widened health disparities and deepened social inequities.** We have also seen an alarming rise in violence — from increased domestic violence to historic levels of gun violence and a spike in hate incidents and crimes — all of which have greatly impacted communities of color, including the Asian American and Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander community.

Violence is a public health issue — and a preventable one. A public health approach to addressing violence and harm has been championed by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the World Health Organization (WHO), and other leading health organizations. A “trauma-informed” approach recognizes that people’s actions and behaviors are often shaped by past experiences of pain and trauma over the life course. A “healing-centered” approach broadens the interventions beyond any single disease or individual alone; it underscores the need for communities to heal from decades, if not centuries, of inequitable policies.

As a trusted institution that has served its community for five decades, Asian Health Services (AHS) has pioneered innovative, trauma-informed, healing-centered, community-focused approaches to violence prevention through a public health perspective. This groundbreaking report highlights the critical community work and partnerships taking place on the ground and identifies key policy recommendations to support vital system changes across city, county, and state levels.

It is important that we pay close attention to the social conditions that make violence more likely, and invest in programs and policies that promote and foster health and healing, especially in communities that have been disproportionately impacted. We all have a critical role to play — violence prevention requires a community-driven and collective impact approach. Together, we can build a healthier, safer and more resilient community.



**Dr. Michael C. Lu**  
*UC Berkeley, Dean of Public Health*



# INTRODUCTION

**Our story of services and advocacy began in 1974.** Born out of the Civil Rights Movement, Asian Health Services (AHS) was founded on the principles of social justice and health equity. Since its inception, we have viewed health and well-being as much broader than just coming in for treatment or services. Five decades later, we are a community health center deeply rooted in our communities with a commitment to advancing patient advocacy and responding to the needs of our community.

During the COVID pandemic, AHS established its Community Healing Unit in response to the increasing hate and violence targeting low-income Asian immigrants and refugees, including our own patients and staff. Our Community Healing Unit takes a public health approach to violence prevention, and creates a safe and trusted space for patients and community members who have experienced violence and crime. From mental health counseling and case management to financial support and complementary healing opportunities, our programs are community-specific, responsive and inclusive of our patients' lived experiences. In response to the heightened violence experienced by both Asian and Black communities in Oakland, we ignited a collaboration with Baywell Health Center (formerly West Oakland Health Council) who played a critical role in supporting AHS to become a federally subcontracted clinic. This collaboration between our two clinics continues the legacy of solidarity that began over three decades ago and reflects a deeply shared commitment to promote safety, healing and justice for all of our communities.

This report aims to expand our collective understanding of violence prevention policies and programs. We invite government agencies and policymakers across all levels to promote safety and healing in all of our communities. Through targeted community based strategies that consider the unique experiences of each of our communities, we can foster safer, healthier and more resilient communities where all individuals can thrive.



**Julia Liou, MPH**  
*CEO, Asian Health Services*

**In recognition that violence profoundly impacts the health and well-being of our communities, AHS and Baywell Health Center initiated the Asian-Black Racial Healing Research Project.** Our research findings acknowledge a divide that exists between our communities, while highlighting a mutual desire for shared connection, healing and a deep commitment towards humanity. We created a regular cadence to share, not only research findings, but also shared and distinct pains our communities were enduring. Learnings from this partnership deepened commitment to an inclusive health equity approach, and where we found ourselves in conversations about violence that excluded the others' communities, we advocated for our partners, knowing that exclusion neglects the totality and nuances of violence, trauma, and healing.

Our deepened commitment to understanding the experiences and perceptions of our own as well as each other's communities led us to engage with hundreds of participants in listening sessions, interviews, focus groups and surveys, delving into topics such as race, crime, mental health and healing. Based on the findings from the community research process, AHS and Baywell Health Center have implemented several joint interventions — from joint food distribution events, cultural celebrations (Black History Month and Lunar New Year) to partnering on a photo portrait and storytelling project. We also find ourselves championing each other's causes, from data disaggregation and language access to fighting against on institutionalized racism and mass incarceration.

This collective work across our communities has been and will continue to be foundational to humanizing our patients and community members on topics related to violence, safety, race, culture, and healing. As two health centers who share an intertwined past from decades ago when Baywell Health Center helped AHS receive its initial federal funding, we know it will be important to continue these critical partnerships and ground future violence prevention interventions and policies in real-world challenges and community specific data, and to collaboratively and collectively advance on an inclusive health equity agenda.



**Thu Quach, PhD, MPH**  
*President, Asian Health Services*



**In the heart of Oakland, in the northern half of Alameda County, where resilience meets profound challenges, violence has for too long shaped the daily realities of our communities.** Often viewed solely as crime, most approaches ignore the trauma, systemic inequities, and social factors perpetuating harm that drive violence. Since 1966, Baywell Health has seen violence as a health crisis needing evidence-based solutions and collective healing — not just law enforcement.

Our nearly 50-year collaboration with Asian Health Services reflects a shared belief in community-driven solutions. Together, we've confronted anti-Asian hate and violence affecting Black communities in Oakland, embodying solidarity rooted in mutual respect, advocacy, and justice, most recently resulting in the Asian-Black Racial Healing Research Project whose research findings inform this report.

This report offers actionable policy recommendations to Alameda County and Oakland, prioritizing prevention, healing, and systemic change. It is a pivotal call to action to dismantle structural inequities and historical divisions. By investing in culturally consistent mental health services and community-led interventions and envisioning a future where collaboration, data-informed strategies, and culturally consistent programs form policy foundations, we can combat violence and promote safety and resilience.

The recommendations, rooted in lived experiences and community voices, center on healing and justice. We advocate for systems prioritizing safety and dignity, such as mental health access, multiracial coalitions, culturally concordant victim services, and investments in the social determinants of safety.

We urge policymakers to act urgently, guided by those most impacted. Through sustained partnership, we can foster neighborhoods where every resident thrives. Violence is preventable; healing is achievable. Our communities deserve a commitment to a safer, healthier future.

Let this report be a call to action — a blueprint for change grounded in the belief that we are stronger together.



**Robert Phillips**

*President and CEO, Baywell Health Center*

## ADOPTING A PUBLIC HEALTH APPROACH TO VIOLENCE

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*“The last three years have made it painfully clear that hate and violence against Asians, Black people, LGBTQ and other marginalized groups continues to inflict deep harm in our communities.”*

— COMMUNITY PARTNER

”

In response to increased violence and racism affecting staff, patients, and community members, Asian Health Services (AHS) established the Community Healing Unit (CHU) in 2021. CHU provides holistic and trauma-informed care to individuals and families impacted by hate, crime, and community violence.

Over the past three years, CHU has assisted more than 300 survivors of violence, primarily low-income Asian immigrants and refugees, who faced homicides, robberies, physical and sexual assaults, gender-based violence, intimate partner violence, carjackings, and home invasions. Through working directly with survivors of violence, AHS gained several key insights:

- **Victims and survivors often experienced retraumatization** when engaging with law enforcement, district attorney offices, and state offices.
- **Victim-centered healing requires holistic efforts beyond the criminal-legal process** such as lay counseling, acupuncture, massage therapy, support groups, systems navigation, case management, food assistance, transportation aid, and financial support.
- **Violence within the Asian community is not a separate phenomenon**, but interconnected with violence experienced by other marginalized communities.
- **Victim support services, mental health interventions, and other services are strengthened** through multiracial partnerships, cross cultural exchanges, and community celebrations.
- **Collaboration between the City of Oakland and Alameda County is essential** for enhancing community-based violence prevention and healing. This includes convening agencies and community stakeholders, providing capacity building, and accessing state and federal resources to bolster the region’s capacity to promote healing.

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*“At the time of my grandmother’s attack in 2019, we did not receive culturally specific wraparound care. Navigating the California Victim Compensation Board was intimidating and cumbersome. I wish we had a case manager to help us fill out the necessary paperwork. I filled out the paperwork alone.”*

— SASANNA YEE

*“After my father’s death, I have often felt that justice is complicated. I often wonder if [early] interventions in the person who was convicted of my father’s death would have allowed him to lead a different life. Would restorative justice have made a difference? Instead of sending him to jail and prison when he was younger, could we as a society have helped to redirect him toward rehabilitative programs and education instead? Would that have prevented what happened?”*

— AMY HO

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These recurring themes in survivors’ stories make it clear that to truly promote healing and create lasting safety, we must invest in a public health approach to violence.

## Social Determinants of Safety

With a precarious federal funding landscape, the social safety net is at risk. We anticipate increased urgency for local governments to address the social determinants of safety — education, housing, employment opportunities, and access to healthcare. These can reduce violence and keep individuals, families, and communities safe from violence and harm. This approach prioritizes the needs of our communities and is more effective than punitive measures like enhanced punishment or expanded criminal-legal enforcement and produces significant cost savings to local communities.<sup>1</sup>

**A 20-year study showed that increasing the number of nonprofit organizations dedicated to violence prevention and community-building efforts significantly reduces violent crime.<sup>2</sup>**

Effective prevention efforts must be trauma-informed and include holistic services like counseling, acupuncture, systems navigation, case management, food assistance, transportation aid, and

<sup>1</sup> Understanding the Social Determinants of Safety: A Policy Framework for Building Safety That Works (<https://civilrightscorps.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/SDOS-V.4.pdf>)

<sup>2</sup> Community and the Crime Decline: The Causal Effect of Local Nonprofits on Violent Crime (<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0003122417736289>)



financial support.<sup>3</sup> It also requires cross-sector collaboration between community organizations, the City of Oakland, and Alameda County.

This report advocates for a holistic community safety policy agenda based on the public health approach. Together with the City of Oakland and Alameda County, we can advance effective community-based solutions to help our seniors, children, and vulnerable populations be safe, moving beyond band-aid solutions.

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3 Violence is a Public Health Issue: Public Health is Essential to Understanding and Treating Violence in the U.S. (<https://apha.org/policies-and-advocacy/public-health-policy-statements/policy-database/2019/01/28/violence-is-a-public-health-issue>)



# POLICY AND SYSTEMS CHANGE RECOMMENDATIONS

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*“As a primary care doctor, I see the daily impact of violence on our patients’ physical and mental health. Rather than only addressing the symptoms, we must all work together to improve the economic, social, and environmental conditions that fuel insecurity, racism, and violence in the first place.”* — DR. MYCHI NGUYEN, AHS CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER

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As both the City of Oakland and Alameda County work to promote public health strategies to address violence — through initiatives like Alameda County Public Health Department’s Office of Violence Prevention and the City of Oakland Department of Violence Prevention — there are valuable opportunities to improve health outcomes by leveraging their collective resources as public health experts, funding bodies, stakeholder conveners, and policymakers. AHS, in partnership with community-based organizations and governmental partners, has developed these recommendations to build upon and advance effective, community-based solutions to enhance safety and healing for all residents.

## **Recommendation #1: Increase access to mental health services, victim services, and holistic healing for victims, justice-involved, and at-risk individuals and families.**

### **Rationale**

Crime and recidivism reduce when communities have access to healthcare, substance use treatment, and mental health services.<sup>4,5,6</sup> In Alameda County, community violence and trauma are the highest ranked mental health priorities for every age group.<sup>7</sup> However, the shortage of licensed mental health therapists forces many victims to seek support outside of clinical therapy. Community-based organizations, health centers, and local cultural and arts play a crucial role at the nexus of violence, mental health, and healing.

4 The consequences of Medicaid expansion under the Affordable Care Act for police arrests (<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0261512>)

5 A cure for crime? Psycho-pharmaceuticals and crime trends (<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/pam.20544>)

6 Substance abuse treatment centers and local crime (<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S009411901830007X>)

7 Mental Health Services Act Alameda County FY 2023–2026 Three Year Program & Expenditure Plan ([https://acmhsa.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/MHSA2024Plan\\_02.pdf](https://acmhsa.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/MHSA2024Plan_02.pdf))





Photos: Joyce Xi

**1.1 Address gaps in the continuum of care for victim services programs by supporting complementary healing interventions, such as lay counseling, peer relationship-building, support groups, and healing circles.** Building upon training efforts by AHS and the Lay Counselor Academy, Alameda County can pilot a program to train community-based organizations and community health center staff as lay mental health counselors to address the mental health workforce shortage. We recommend supporting community health centers and community-based organizations to develop comprehensive community-based victims services, including hiring bilingual advocates and case managers. The City of Oakland and Alameda County may convene community health centers with violence prevention organizations to enhance programs, share data and referrals, leverage funding opportunities, and identify needs. They can also integrate community health centers into the violence prevention framework and refer clients for victims support and healthcare.

**1.2 With the loss of mental health prevention funding through Prop. 1, Alameda County must preserve the preventive mental health programs that are vital to violence prevention strategies.** This recommendation is based on the success of Prevention and Early Intervention funds, which enable community-based organizations to provide culturally and linguistically tailored care that overcomes stigma and language. If prevention and early intervention dollars are cut, this will result in more mental health hospitalizations. Our community needs a robust community-based prevention system, inclusive of mental health, to be sustained at current levels and without cutting other needed services.

**1.3 Support culture and arts-based healing programs that promote violence prevention and empower impacted communities to take action towards healing.** We recommend partnering with community-based organizations to hire and train complementary healing providers utilizing state or federal funding, such as MediCal reimbursements. The City of Oakland and County of Alameda can support mental health and wellness programs beyond clinical therapy, including cultural healing, massage therapy, support groups, acupuncture, exercise groups, taichi, yoga, and community-wide healing events. They can also engage local cultural artists to invest in

community art related to hope and healing like ARTogether, the [National League of Cities'](#) partnership with local governments to commission local artists, and many other local arts groups. Complementing western mental health practices with culture-based healing medicines and modalities may help to effectively address the impacts of violence and enhance community safety and healing.

## **Recommendation #2: Invest in comprehensive community violence prevention.**

### **Rationale**

Everyone who has suffered trauma deserves support, including youth, seniors, English and non-English speakers, individuals impacted by gang and group violence, and other targets of crime. The COVID-19 pandemic heightened social isolation and fear, particularly among seniors and young people.<sup>8</sup> In 2022, more than 1 in 10 Californians aged 16 to 24 were “disconnected,” meaning they were neither in school, employed, or looking for a job.<sup>9</sup> By prioritizing community-based programs, we can create more equitable, responsive, and innovative strategies to meet community needs.<sup>10</sup>

**2.1 Broaden and sustain funding for community violence intervention programs that intervene and de-escalate violent conflicts and provide supportive services.** As a result of a diversity of community based violence prevention programs, including CEASEFIRE, homicides have decreased by 32% in Oakland.<sup>11</sup> We recommend expanding violence prevention strategies County-wide, replicating effective violence interrupter programs, addressing crime prevention strategies for small businesses, and offering comprehensive victim support services to all communities. This expansion would offer an opportunity to engage diverse stakeholders in a more comprehensive approach to safety, including victims of targeted robberies, small businesses, and seniors. We recommend prioritizing funding for community-based initiatives that are deeply rooted in local neighborhoods, as this approach will create safer, more resilient communities and will provide more effective solutions to address the diverse forms of violence across Alameda County.

**2.2 Support and replicate proven community ambassador and mediator programs that have successfully fostered safe neighborhoods through building relationships between community members, businesses, and unhoused individuals, de-escalating conflicts, and beautifying the streets and sidewalks.** We recommend supporting programs like the [Family Bridges](#) community mediators program, which stabilize and reintegrate individuals who are at-risk, houseless, or formerly incarcerated. The City of Oakland and County of Alameda should

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8 9 children aged 12 to 17 arrested in dozens of Oakland robberies (<https://www.cbsnews.com/sanfrancisco/news/oakland-robberies-teenagers-suspects-arrested/>)

9 'Literally life or death': California kids are disappearing from school and the workforce. (<https://www.sfchronicle.com/opinion/emilyhoeven/article/kids-young-adults-california-19457984.php>)

10 Coordinating Safety: Building and Sustaining Offices of Violence Prevention and Neighborhood Safety (<https://vera-institute.files.svdcn.com/production/downloads/publications/2023-OVPNS-Report.pdf>)

11 Homicides are finally and significantly falling in Oakland (<https://oaklandside.org/2024/10/31/oakland-homicides-shootings-violent-crime-down/>)



provide opportunities for individuals in transition to actively contribute to the vibrancy of Chinatown, Little Saigon, Fruitvale, Koreatown/Northgate, Hegenberger corridor, 7th Street in West Oakland, and other commercial districts. These programs provide valuable work experience and relationships as a pathway toward stable employment and housing.

**2.3 Provide initial capital investments and funding for supportive services that enhance the safety and well-being of seniors, focusing on reducing isolation, preventing abuse, and improving street safety.** We recommend Alameda County provide capital funding for community-based organizations to purchase vehicles to provide transportation assistance for seniors to healthcare visits, prescription pick up, wellness trips, shopping, and social support. For example, the [Center for Empowering Refugees and Immigrants](#) is partnering with AHS to pilot a senior health transportation program, which assists seniors with getting to and from medical appointments, running errands, and getting exercise, among other support. The City of Oakland and Alameda County can also provide ongoing funding for supportive services to improve transportation access for seniors in the long term.

**2.4 Support and expand education and other reentry services for justice-involved youth in Alameda County by removing barriers to education and jobs.** The County can deploy realignment dollars via AB 109 and SB 823<sup>12</sup> to support community college programs that serve incarcerated and formerly incarcerated students. For example, [Restoring Our Communities \(ROC\) of Laney College](#), [Street Scholars of Merritt College](#), and [Restorative Integrated Self-Education](#)

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12 California Senate Bill 823 (SB 823), also known as AB 1868, 2020 ([https://www.bscc.ca.gov/s\\_dijrealignment/](https://www.bscc.ca.gov/s_dijrealignment/))



Photo courtesy of Self-Help



Photo courtesy of Trybe



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(RISE) of Chabot College all provide support for justice impacted students incarcerated at Santa Rita Jail, the Alameda County Juvenile Justice Center, and those on state parole, county probation, and federal probation.

## Recommendation #3: Improve language access, cultural competency, and data collection to engage a broader, more diverse population about safety and violence prevention.

### Rationale

Individuals impacted by violence often face retraumatization due to language and cultural barriers when navigating systems and institutions.<sup>13</sup> Ethnic media is a crucial medium for providing accurate safety and health information to many limited-English or non-English speaking residents. Additionally, crime data is flawed (underreporting, inaccuracies, narrow view), so it is imperative to develop a dashboard of holistic safety metrics.<sup>14</sup>

**3.1 Pass an Alameda County language access ordinance to provide interpretation and translation services, assign dedicated staff to manage language access issues, develop language access plans and reports, and disseminate in-language information through ethnic media channels.** We recommend partnering with community-based organizations and community health centers to provide input on a county-wide language access ordinance and conduct patient surveys on community safety and well-being. An Alameda County language access ordinance, similar to models from Santa Clara, San Francisco, and Oakland, would provide essential support for limited English speaking communities in our diverse county.<sup>15,16,17,18</sup>

13 Criminal Victimization, 2022 (<https://bjs.ojp.gov/library/publications/criminal-victimization-2022>)

14 Redefining Community Safety (<https://safetyandjusticechallenge.org/resources/redefining-community-safety/>)

15 County of Santa Clara Language Access - Board Policy (<https://desj.santaclaracounty.gov/lau/about>)

16 San Francisco's Language Access Ordinance (<https://sfplanning.org/policies/language-assistance#permit-anchor-0>)

17 City of Oakland Language Access Plan

([https://cao-94612.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Title-VI-LEP-Plan\\_English\\_2.25.19.pdf](https://cao-94612.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/Title-VI-LEP-Plan_English_2.25.19.pdf))

18 A Framework for Language Access ([https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/language-access-2021\\_final.pdf](https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/language-access-2021_final.pdf))





Photo: Joyce Xi

**3.2 Partner with community-based organizations and community health centers that have language access and cultural competency expertise to provide victim services and violence prevention.** The City of Oakland and Alameda County can leverage their convening power and resources to pilot models that fill gaps and create opportunities for community members to participate in the delivery of community care.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, Alameda County can align its policy advocacy to support holistic healing providers (e.g., acupuncturists, lay counselors, etc.) with community-based organizations and community clinics to create more vehicles for funding reimbursements at the state and federal levels.

**3.3 Develop a community-driven dashboard with alternative metrics that go beyond crime statistics, allowing diverse communities to define safety and track their own measure of safety, informed by their cultural and lived experiences.** This facilitates the development of locally driven priorities and interventions to advance safety for all.<sup>19</sup> Key metrics could include survey data on perceived feelings of safety, harassment, discrimination, and crime victimization; and other quantitative measures such as day/night time foot traffic, service utilization, injury reports, hospital emergency admissions, and incident reporting rates. Additional metrics emphasize a comprehensive understanding of safety that also includes social cohesion, neighborhood trust, economic stability, access to healthcare, education, and community trust as key components of a safe and healthy community.<sup>20</sup>

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19 Redefining Community Safety (<https://safetyandjusticechallenge.org/resources/redefining-community-safety/>)

20 Redefining Community Safety (<https://safetyandjusticechallenge.org/resources/redefining-community-safety/>)

## Recommendation #4: Prioritize racial equity, multiracial collaboration, and alliance building as violence prevention strategies.

### Rationale

Centering the most marginalized and building connectivity across Black, Brown, Indigenous, immigrant, refugee, and other communities of color is crucial in the context of community safety, especially amid incidents of racialized violence and lack of understanding and connection between different communities.

**4.1 City of Oakland and Alameda County should convene multiracial, multi-generational stakeholders to address gaps in the violence prevention and victims' support ecosystem using a public health framework.** Drawing on interviews and focus groups conducted by AHS and Baywell Health as part of the Asian-Black Racial Healing Research Project, cross racial healing efforts may include:

- Build cross-cultural connections through shared experiences in music, movies, food, and family activities to foster understanding and empathy.
- Integrate diverse culture-based healing modalities with Western mental health practices to effectively address the impacts of violence and promote safety.

*Read more about the Asian-Black Racial Healing Research Project on page 26.*



Photo: Joyce Xi



**4.2 Invest in community empowerment for victims of violence, including systems-impacted individuals, e.g., experiential learning, community-building programs, and cultural exchanges.** We recommend more opportunities to build cross-cultural connections to foster understanding and empathy, such as visiting sites with historical and cultural significance (e.g., the Oakland Chinatown Coalition Community Safety Education Series) and multiracial events, featuring music, movies, food, families, and language diversity. Complementing western mental health practices with culture-based healing medicines and modalities may help to effectively address the impacts of violence and enhance community safety and healing.

**Recommendation #5: Make deep investments in a comprehensive public health framework for violence prevention, prioritizing the social determinants of safety such as safe neighborhoods, public spaces, educational opportunities, and affordable housing.**

### Rationale

As with public health, prevention approaches are the most effective way to address violence and maintain public safety. Measures such as increasing affordable and supportive housing, adding greenery, improving air quality, providing educational opportunities and supporting youth, employing at-risk youth, revitalizing vacant lots, and treating causes rather than symptoms are effective, community-building actions. These efforts not only foster safer neighborhoods, but also lead to long-term cost savings in public safety for local communities.<sup>21</sup>



21 It's Not Just Mental Health. Addressing 'Social Determinants of Safety' Can Prevent Gun Violence (<https://nextcity.org/urbanist-news/not-mental-health-social-determinants-of-safety-prevent-gun-violence>)

**5.1 Prioritize deeply affordable and permanent supportive housing, rental assistance, and greater enforcement of tenant protections and utilities assistance.** Increase investments in affordable and permanent supportive housing for people with serious mental illness and substance use disorders like those outlined in the Care First, Jails Last resolution.<sup>22</sup> Create and support an anti-displacement and homelessness prevention system, expand legal and eviction prevention services for low-income people at risk of homelessness, implement [Just Cause](#) policies in Alameda County-supported housing projects, and dedicate staff to support these efforts.

**5.2 Prioritize resources for school-based health centers and orient their mission and processes towards community safety and healing.** Alameda County and the City of Oakland can convene community partners through the [Alameda County Center for Healthy Schools and Communities](#) and the [Oakland Department of Violence Prevention](#). School-based health centers can play a key role in identifying and addressing issues that youth are experiencing, such as domestic abuse, economic hardship, gang violence, racial conflict, bullying, and sexual harassment/violence. These initiatives can also promote high school students' well-being and learning, prevent youth violence, and reduce chronic absenteeism — helping students stay on track for graduation.

**5.3 Provide resources and incentives to small businesses for graffiti abatement, storefront improvements, community art installations, and the creation of community gathering spaces.** These measures increase foot traffic and create safe and vibrant neighborhoods for residents. The City of Oakland and Alameda County can work together to prioritize investments and programming in small business corridors.

**5.4 Prioritize a City of Oakland Parks Master Plan to make a thriving parks system for all Oakland and Alameda County residents.**<sup>23</sup> The investment and equity challenges facing Oakland parks underscore the need for a comprehensive Parks Master Plan. This plan would facilitate the strategic design of Oakland's parks and green spaces and allow city staff to seek funding for capital projects that address community needs and ensure equitable resources allocation. The City of Oakland and Alameda County could also improve existing assets, such as lighting, accessibility, community gardens, courts, and recreation centers. Additionally, expanding the Oakland's Town Nights program would deepen relationships built over previous years, further engaging the community and activating public spaces.

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<sup>22</sup> Care First Community Coalition (<https://www.carefirstcoalition.org/care-first-jails-last-policy.html>)

<sup>23</sup> Most Oaklanders live 10 minutes from a park—but those parks are not equitably distributed (<https://oaklandside.org/2024/05/22/oakland-parkscore-trust-for-public-land-ranks-52/>)

# SHARING WHAT WORKS



The following three case studies highlight the potential for meaningful change when public health strategies are integrated into violence prevention and community safety in the City of Oakland and Alameda County.

Photos: Joyce Xi







**PG 26 — HEALING TOGETHER: INSIGHTS FROM THE ASIAN-BLACK RACIAL HEALING RESEARCH PROJECT**

**PG 30 — CULTIVATING COMMUNITY SAFETY THROUGH COMMUNITY ORGANIZING**

**PG 34 — THE POWER OF COMMUNITY-BASED SOLUTIONS TO CREATE HEALING AND SAFETY: AHS STOP THE HATE PROGRAM**

Photos (clockwise): Trybe, Joyce Xi





# Healing Together: Insights from the Asian-Black Racial Healing Research Project

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*“I noticed that both of our communities are hurting and a long history of oppression and racism and hate towards both of us. I like seeing us come together, helping each other.”*

— ASIAN AMERICAN PARTICIPANT

*“There is actually collective historical trauma that we hold and we carry. And that we are also trying to recognize and heal for our future generations not to have to hold [that trauma] the same way.”*

— BLACK PARTICIPANT

”

**Background:** In 2021, Asian Health Services and Baywell Health initiated the Asian-Black Racial Healing Research Project to address the violence experienced by both Asian and Black communities. Engaging over 1,200 participants through listening sessions, interviews, surveys, and focus groups, the project aimed to understand and heal the impacts of violence, racism, and healing.

Photos: Joyce Xi



**Key Activities:** The Asian-Black Racial Healing Research Project emphasized the importance of cross-cultural collaboration, understanding, and healing in addressing community violence and trauma.

## Interviews, Focus Groups, and Surveys

AHS and Baywell Health engaged over 1,000 Asian and Black community members in a series of listening sessions, interviews, focus groups, and surveys to discuss violence, racism, and healing. They explored experiences and perceptions of violence within and between the communities.

## Cultural Celebrations

Lunar New Year and Black History Month events were co-hosted featuring diverse cultural performances like African drumming, Taiko drumming, lion dance, and Chinese dancing.

## Joint Food Distribution

Both communities held joint food distribution events to address experiences with racial discrimination, competition and animosity at food giveaways and support community solidarity.



## Community Exchanges

Staff and community member exchanges were held including tours and healing circles at Baywell Health by a group of Chinese seniors to foster understanding and empathy.

## Mental Health Training

AHS and Baywell Health explored strategies to address racial trauma in a mental healthcare setting, including lay counselor training and implementation.







**Impact:** The project activities helped bridge gaps in understanding and fostered empathy between Asian and Black communities. Cultural events and community exchanges built connections and solidarity, leveraging linguistic and cultural diversity as strengths. These activities promoted opportunities to communicate and exchange ideas, experiences, and perspectives.

Additionally, the project encouraged both individual and collective resilience through mental health practices and cross-racial culture-based celebrations.



## Policy Recommendations Connection

- ✓ Invest in comprehensive community violence prevention.
- ✓ Prioritize racial equity, multiracial collaboration, and alliance building as violence prevention strategies.

Photos: Joyce Xi

## Key Findings on Violence and Community Impacts

In 2021, AHS and Baywell Health conducted extensive interviews and focus groups to understand the experiences of violence, racism, and healing within the Asian and Black communities in Oakland.

### AHS Focus Groups Key Findings

- Participants from six Asian language groups consistently reported the harmful impacts of violence, resulting in fear, anxiety, and chronic stress, affecting both mental and physical health.
- Community members grappled with their own trauma while trying to understand and relate to the traumas experienced by members of other racialized groups.
- Opinions varied on whether violence against Asian Americans was racially motivated or part of broader community violence affecting all groups in Oakland.
- Language barriers were frequently cited as sources of tension and misunderstanding.

### Baywell Health Focus Groups Key Findings

- A majority of participants believe violence against both Black and Asian communities in Oakland has increased.
- Violence against Asian residents was identified as a serious problem, evoking feelings of horror, sadness, and fear.
- Many felt the Black community was often blamed for the violence.
- Participants linked the prevalence of violence to destabilizing factors such as: a frayed social fabric, the multifaceted impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, scarcity and disparities in access to resources.
- Factors like hopelessness, anger, lack of mental health support and systemic Black socioeconomic disadvantage were linked to violence.
- The media's role in perpetuating negative stereotypes about Black people was also highlighted as exacerbating fear and violence.

## Shared Recommendations by Both Communities

- ✓ **Improve material conditions for everyone.** This includes addressing the root causes of violence, such as poverty, education, and housing.
- ✓ **Build cross-cultural connections through shared experiences** in music, movies, food, and family activities to foster understanding and empathy.
- ✓ **Integrate culture-based healing modalities with Western mental health practices** to effectively address the impacts of violence and promote safety.
- ✓ **Explore both individual and collective forms of resilience and care**, and build solidarity that transcends language barriers.
- ✓ **Promote narrative change and storytelling** to increase empathy and understanding, while countering stereotypes and fear mongering.

Read more about the [preliminary research findings](#)





## Cultivating Community Safety Through Community Organizing

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*“Before I came to this series, I always believed community safety was totally reliant on the police. But through these activities I realized that the safety of our community relies not only on the police but also on all of us: government, community, and especially community as a whole.”*

— LILY ZHU, AHS PATIENT LEADERSHIP COUNCIL MEMBER

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**Background:** AHS, through the Oakland Chinatown Coalition, developed a program to encourage community healing by providing opportunities to visit historic sites, learn about community partners, and interact with people from different backgrounds.

**Key Activities:** AHS and the Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN) co-led a five-part experiential learning series with 12 Chinese-speaking seniors on comprehensive community safety and healing from trauma.

### Experiential Learning

- The series included three field trips where participants gained insights into the history of segregation, redlining, and forced displacement affecting Asian immigrants in San Francisco and the Black community in West Oakland.





- During a visit to San Quentin Prison, participants met incarcerated individuals and learned about their childhood experiences and ideas for effective rehabilitation.
- Participants learned about the Black Panther Party and the formation of Baywell Health (formerly named West Oakland Health Council).

### Exchanges with Community Partners

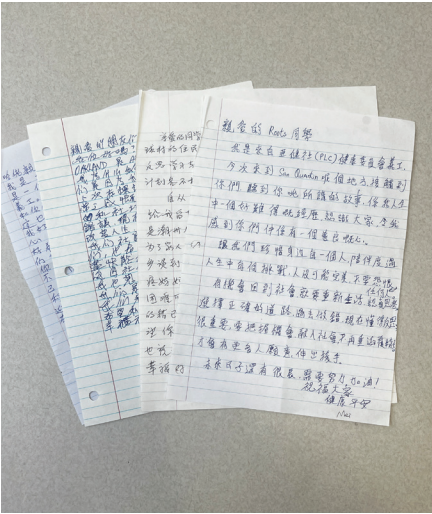
Participants engaged with eight different organizations, including the Asian Prisoner Support Committee, West Oakland Mural Project, Chinese Culture Center of San Francisco, Family Bridges Community Mediators, and Baywell Health.

### Reflection and Dialogue Circles

- The series included activities where participants shared their thoughts and reflections over tea and food.
- Inspired by the incarcerated students, the seniors wrote letters of encouragement to the incarcerated community members, expressing empathy and hope for their future.

*Although our time together was short, I am deeply thankful for your openness and warmth. Your stories have truly touched our hearts. Each one of you shared something moving and powerful. Though the journey home may be full of challenges and uncertainties, remember that every step brings you closer to home and every day brings you closer to hope.*

*We hope you take good care of yourselves and look forward to the day you can reunite with your families freely and happily. When you return to society, I encourage you to make your own contributions and help build a better community for everyone.*



*To those of you serving your time behind bars, please know that there are many caring community members like us who wish you well. Please continue to take care of yourselves. We hope that you will soon be reunited with your families. As a Chinese saying goes, "The past cannot be recovered, but the future can be remedied."*

**Impact:** The series broadened the participants' understanding of comprehensive community safety. By visiting cultural landmarks and community institutions, participants learned firsthand about the people and communities impacted by the racialized history of the United States. The emotional connections formed during the visit with incarcerated individuals inspired participants to actively promote healing and support within their community. As a result, participants became more interested in a broader set of policy and community solutions for public safety, including mental health support, educational support for young people, job and housing opportunities for formerly incarcerated individuals, and the importance of multiracial community-building.

Watch the short documentary about the project, [Love Has Two Meanings](#).

## Policy Recommendation Connection

- ✓ Increase access to mental health services, victims services, and holistic healing for victims, justice-involved, and at-risk individuals and families.
- ✓ Invest in comprehensive community violence prevention.
- ✓ Prioritize racial equity, multiracial collaboration, and alliance building as violence prevention strategies.
- ✓ Make deep investments in a comprehensive public health framework for violence prevention, prioritizing the social determinants of safety such as safe neighborhoods, public spaces, educational opportunities, and affordable housing.



Visiting and reenacting the International Hotel struggle in SF Chinatown / Manilatown





Visiting West Oakland, learning about the history of segregation, redlining, and forced displacement affecting the Black community, as well as learning about the Black Panther Party and formation of our partner, Baywell Health.





# The Power of Community-Based Solutions to Create Healing and Safety: AHS Stop the Hate Program

Photo courtesy of RAMS, Inc.

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*“At the end of the day, I think it’s a successful showing of how we all care deeply for our communities and for our futures... It can only make us stronger, more compassionate, more human, more curious about what’s possible instead of staying in fear of what has happened.”*

— STOP THE HATE COMMUNITY PARTNER

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**Background:** Safety and healing are essential for individual and community well-being. Through the API Equity Budget, the California State Legislature allocated over \$100 million across the state over three years to the Stop the Hate Program, supporting community organizations in providing direct services to victims of hate and their families. This funding also supports prevention and intervention to address hate.

**Key Activities:** In the first year, AHS’ Stop the Hate Program funded \$3.625 million in state grants to twenty-one community organizations in the Bay Area, South Bay, and Central Coast.

## Direct Services

- Provided mental and complementary health services, wellness and community healing, legal services, navigation, case management, and referrals.

- Reached 4,000+ individuals with mental health services and 6,000+ with wellness and community healing work.
- Ensured accessibility for diverse communities by delivering services in multiple languages including Burmese, Cantonese, English, Hmong, Japanese, Khmer, Korean, Lao, Mandarin, Spanish, Thai, Vietnamese, other Chinese languages, and other non-english languages.

## Intervention Services

- Reached nearly 500,000 individuals through 1,448 outreach sessions and 113 training sessions.
- Engaged in partnerships with local governments and institutional collaborators to enhance response efforts.
- Developed a coordinated response plan with various local entities to improve service delivery.



Photo: Joyce Xi

## Prevention Services

- Organized arts-based cultural initiatives, youth development programs, senior safety and escort programs and individual and community safety planning reaching 28,000+ individuals.
- Conducted 155 bystander and de-escalation trainings, 1,492 arts-based and other cultural work activities, and 378 youth development programs.
- Fostered cross-racial collaboration to strengthen community alliances and promote understanding.

**Impact:** The Stop the Hate program's first year highlights the effectiveness of community-based solutions in creating healing and safety. By leveraging the trust and expertise of local organizations, the program successfully addressed hate and violence, showcasing the power of holistic community-based organizations to address hate.

To learn more, visit [asianhealthservices.org/stop-the-hate-report-year-1](https://asianhealthservices.org/stop-the-hate-report-year-1)

## Policy Recommendation Connection

- ✓ Increase access to mental health services, victims services, and holistic healing for victims, justice-involved, and at-risk individuals and families.
- ✓ Invest in comprehensive community violence prevention.
- ✓ Improve language access, cultural competency, and data collection to engage a broader more diverse population about safety and violence prevention.
- ✓ Prioritize racial equity, multiracial collaboration, and alliance building as violence prevention strategies.





**In response to homelessness, gun violence, sex trafficking, and armed robberies in Oakland’s Little Saigon neighborhood, Trybe is transforming Clinton Park.**

**Trybe** renovated and re-opened the Clinton Park Community Center, where they will offer services and resources to improve health, mental health, support for small businesses, and more. Trybe also activated the park through Town Nights and Family Fridays events, bringing thousands of community members to celebrate community and receive free food and resources. *Photos courtesy of Trybe*







**Asian Pacific Environmental Network (APEN) is an environmental justice organization with deep roots in California's Asian immigrant and refugee communities.**

APEN's youth wanted their history and culture reflected in the built environment of their community. They partnered with the elder advisory board to create a mural showcasing the experiences and hopes of Southeast Asians in Richmond and the East Bay.

*Photos: Denny Khamphanthon, Monet Khanyahl*

**Self-Help for the Elderly (Self-Help) promotes senior independence, dignity, and self-worth.**

The organization serves 40,000 seniors annually in San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Alameda, and Contra Costa. They provide self-defense workshops and door-to-door escort services to help seniors and adults with disabilities feel safe going outside.

*Photo courtesy of Self-Help*



## CONCLUSION: FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The Community Safety and Healing Policy Report highlights the meaningful progress achieved through a public health approach to violence prevention and enhancing community safety. By prioritizing the social determinants of safety, the City of Oakland and Alameda County can create a safer, more inclusive environment for all. These collaborative initiatives showcase the power of community-based solutions in addressing violence and promoting healing.

### Future directions should involve continued investment in the five policy and systems change recommendations:

- ✓ **Increase access to mental health services, victims services, and cultural and holistic healing** for victims, justice-involved, and at-risk individuals and families.
- ✓ **Invest in comprehensive community violence prevention.**
- ✓ **Improve language access, cultural competency, and data collection** to engage a broader more diverse population about safety and violence prevention.
- ✓ **Prioritize racial equity, multiracial collaboration, and alliance building** as violence prevention strategies.
- ✓ **Make deep investments in a comprehensive public health framework** for violence prevention, prioritizing the social determinants of safety such as safe neighborhoods, public spaces, educational opportunities and affordable housing.

By committing to these recommendations, we can advance meaningful change and create a foundation for long-term community safety and well-being.

*This report was developed and edited in partnership with Marianne Chung, Elaine Andres, and Kim Nguyen of [reimagine collective](https://reimaginecollective.org).*

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### About Asian Health Services

Asian Health Services (AHS), founded in 1974, provides health, social, and advocacy services for 50,000 patients in English and 14 languages: Korean, ASL, Lao, Burmese, Mandarin, Cantonese, French, Mien, Karen, Mongolian, Karenni, Tagalog, Khmer, and Vietnamese. AHS also provides mental health services, systems navigation, case management, and cultural healing activities for survivors of crime, hate, and violence. [asianhealthservices.org](https://asianhealthservices.org)









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HEALTH CARE FOR ALL. ADVOCACY FOR THE UNDERSERVED.

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