



COVID-19 Survivor Impact Briefs

Boys and Men of Color

The National Resource Center for Reaching Victims conducted a series of listening sessions to unearth the impact the COVID-19 health crisis is having on underserved victims of crime and better resource the crime victim services field to respond to those needs.

This brief summarizes the issues and strategies that emerged from listening sessions on boys and men of color survivors.

Introduction

Boys and Men of Color (BMOC) and the providers that serve them, have been greatly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Boys and Men of Color experience high levels of poverty, crime, and trauma and COVID-19 has only amplified these challenges. This brief explores some of those needs and creative solutions shared during listening sessions, strategy sessions, and conversations with survivors.

Unique Impacts

Issues Amplified During this Crisis

- Boys and Men of Color have lost their jobs due to the pandemic. A large percentage work in industries that have seen massive business closure due to COVID-19. Unable to generate income, those who have lost their job are experiencing heightened anxiety over the uncertainty of when shelter-in-place orders will be lifted and businesses will reopen to be able to meet their basic needs. There is also a large percentage of men that are essential workers and because they must continue working, their chance of infection is greater.
- Boys and Men of Color are more likely to have underlying conditions such as heart disease. Based on currently available information, such conditions have been linked to a higher risk of severe infection from coronavirus. This knowledge has created and exacerbated existing anxiety among BMOC and their communities over the health implications of coronavirus.

Shelter-in-Place Orders have Increased Vulnerabilities and Impacted Important Services

- BMOC experience high levels of trauma which are likely to be exacerbated by the shelter-in-place orders and the lifestyle adjustments caused by COVID-19. Shelter-in-place orders have restricted access to healthy trauma coping mechanisms and some may be resorting to unhealthy activities such as alcohol consumption and drug use. The psychologically taxing nature of sheltering-in-place is likely to exacerbate pre-existing trauma and anxiety as well.
- Incarcerated people are being released from prisons and jails to prevent the spread of COVID-19. A large percentage of incarcerated people are survivors of violence, and the experience of re-entering society after long periods of incarceration is extremely challenging. Having to re-enter during a pandemic is especially traumatizing, and many of the programs and services meant to help people with this transition have shut down due to coronavirus or are overburdened due to higher demand. The needs of this population are going unmet and more resources are needed for organizations that can provide these services.

- Engaging and retaining Boys and Men of Color in services has always been a major challenge for providers due to this population's lack of trust in service providers, lack of resources to access available services, and lack of culturally competent care. Retention is also a major challenge. Because of COVID-19 and the shift to digital platforms as a means to facilitate services, it has been reported that providers are having a harder time keeping BMOC engaged.
- Remote learning under coronavirus presents many challenges for BMOC. Many service providers have said clients do not have access to basic technology like internet and computers.

COVID-19 has Exposed Racial Inequality

- Some of the policies that have emerged to provide relief to individuals, organizations, and businesses due to coronavirus have been discriminatory. The Payment Protection Program, for example, aims to give COVID-19 relief to small businesses, however, it disqualifies any business or organization that hires formerly incarcerated people. A disproportionate number of BMOC have been impacted by the criminal legal system, and these discriminatory clauses punish organizations that support incarcerated survivors through employment by disqualifying them for emergency funds they may need to sustain their organizations. More resources are needed for these organizations.
- Covid-19 has fueled racism against African-American and Latino communities. As data shows that death rates among Latinos and African-Americans is higher, politicians have made racist comments, suggesting that the lifestyle choices of these groups is a reason they are getting sick. Victim blaming, such as this, is triggering for Boys and Men of Color who have experienced high levels of racism throughout their lives. More, there has been conversation around whether it is safe for BMOC to wear the required masks given universal stereotypes that influence perception of them as a threat.

- Many Boys and Men of Color have experienced negative interactions with healthcare providers in the past. More negative experiences have been reported since coronavirus. As healthcare providers-- doctors, medical staff, and first responders--are experiencing heightened levels of stress, there have been more reported cases of implicit bias against BMOC coming from healthcare providers. Even one negative experience in a healthcare setting can make someone from this population less likely to seek services again.
- African American males are over represented with cases and death from COVID-19. The community needs better data. Comprehensive demographic data on people who are tested or treated for COVID-19 does not exist. Senator Warren and Representative Pressley are leading the way and asking state and county hospitals and labs to report the racial demographics of people affected by COVID-19. Right now, the survey data available shows that the African American population is disproportionately impacted; in a number of major cities, African Americans make up a low percentage of the population but a high percentage of COVID-19 fatalities. With better data, there will be a better understanding of who is most vulnerable, and how to better serve this population.
- Undocumented immigrants are still being deported by ICE during the pandemic. This might prevent undocumented people from getting tested and treated if they come down with coronavirus symptoms. More, if they are arrested, they will likely be sent to detention centers or jails where their risk of infection is higher.

Promising Strategies

- Organizations have integrated healing, self care, and meditation practices into their workday to reduce stress brought on by COVID-19.
- Service providers are utilizing available video technology to stay connected to clients, and are increasing levels of communication to ensure clients stay engaged and feel supported.
- Some programs are creating incentives to keep BMOC participating in programs, such as paying them for their time. Others have even paid them to obey self-quarantine.

- Some providers have seen a drop in clientele due to coronavirus and are using social media as a way to spread the word that individual and group services are still being offered. Others are expanding their geographic area to help offer services in areas where services, such as crisis centers, are going inactive.
- Communities have addressed the problem of technology access in a number of innovative ways, such as creating hot spots in communities. Others have urged institutions to distribute excess stockpile of devices to students. In one case, a school in Montgomery, Alabama converted buses into mobile hotspots. Some communities have been conducting local surveys to identify which children need laptops and wifi, and have set up days that parents can come to the child's school to pick up devices.
- Mutual aid networks in the community have emerged to help with community needs such as grocery delivery and material and emotional support.



About the National Resource Center for Reaching Victims

The National Resource Center for Reaching Victims (NRC) is a clearinghouse for victim service providers, culturally specific organizations, criminal justice professionals, and policymakers to get information and expert guidance to enhance their capacity to identify, reach, and serve all victims, especially those from communities that are underrepresented in healing services and avenues to justice. For more information about the NRC, visit the NRC's website at <http://reachingvictims.org>.

About Common Justice

Common Justice develops and advances solutions to violence that transform the lives of those harmed and foster racial equity without relying on incarceration. Locally, we operate the first alternative-to-incarceration and victim-service program in the United States that focuses on violent felonies in the adult courts. Nationally, we leverage the lessons from our direct service to transform the justice system through partnerships, advocacy, and elevating the experience and power of those most impacted. Rigorous and hopeful, we build practical strategies to hold people accountable for harm, break cycles of violence, and secure safety, healing, and justice for survivors and their communities. For more information about Common Justice visit the Common Justice website at <https://www.commonjustice.org>

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