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Los Angeles' data-informed approach to comprehensive community care

The City of Los Angeles Mayor's Office of [Gang Reduction and Youth Development (GRYD)](#) is a leader in the efforts to address gang violence, with a vision to create communities that are healthy, peaceful, and thriving. The Los Angeles Mayor's Office team is re-imagining community-based public safety, and GRYD is a critical partner in that mission.

GRYD was established in July 2007 to address gang violence in a coordinated way throughout the City of Los Angeles, implementing the GRYD Comprehensive Strategy to drive funding and practice decisions across areas designated as GRYD Zones. There are currently 23 GRYD Zones throughout the City of Los Angeles and the GRYD Office contracts with community-based organizations to provide gang intervention and prevention services, violence interruption, community engagement programming, and various other initiatives in each GRYD Zone.

GRYD is committed to data-informed practices, a fundamental building block aligned with comprehensive community care. This strategic approach leverages coordination, access, visibility, and accountability to enhance service delivery and advance the outcomes within the community. A robust data infrastructure provides support for documenting GRYD's services, establishing an imperative data culture that continues to bridge strategic relationships with community-based stakeholders and city leaders to ensure meaningful and impactful program outcomes.[1]

CLIENT

City of Los Angeles Mayor's Office of Gang Reduction and Youth Development

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1 Tremblay, A., Herz, D.C., Zachery, R., & Kraus, M. (2020). The Los Angeles Mayor's Office of Gang Reduction and Youth Development Comprehensive Strategy (GRYD Research Brief No. 1). Los Angeles, CA: California State University, Los Angeles. https://www.juvenilejusticeresearch.com/projects/gryd/briefs

As a recognized leader in community development, GRYD understands how to build and scale data infrastructure, align with city leaders, and demonstrate value through mayoral changes. The office has also demonstrated an enhanced program service delivery through data analysis and feedback to enable learning and growth throughout the GRYD community.

Bonterra, a leading solution provider for public sector agencies, helps move GRYD's data-informed culture forward. Let's dive into how Bonterra Impact Management supports its data capabilities and how GRYD has improved outcomes across Los Angeles.

Development of a data-informed culture

For over a decade, GRYD leadership has committed to building a data infrastructure, as evidenced by its consistent investment of time and money. Molly Kraus, director of the GRYD Research and Evaluation Team at California State University, Los Angeles, adds: "Data is an investment and is something that needs to be sustainable, supported, and connected to the funders, the organizations, and the programming in a meaningful way in order to have benefits. We're fortunate that this is something we've been able to achieve."

The GRYD Office was established in 2007, and in 2009, services began in full. For the next two years, GRYD contracted service providers gathered some data on their own, but there was a lack of an internal, cohesive, organized data collection infrastructure.

In 2011, the GRYD Comprehensive Strategy was launched, serving as a way to standardize how services were being provided citywide across the 21 community-based organizations that were funded to deliver GRYD services following GRYD's programmatic models. As part of the implementation of the GRYD Comprehensive Strategy, service provision and data collection were aligned across all GRYD providers. The first years of data collection efforts utilized an access hosting database system. In 2014, GRYD data collection efforts were migrated to the current GRYD Database, built in partnership with Bonterra. As of 2022, GRYD will additionally be using Bonterra Impact Management solutions for select initiatives.

> **Between Jan. 1, 2016, and Dec. 31, 2020, 5,684 young people enrolled in GRYD prevention services and participated in over 169,000 program-sponsored activities.**
>
> More than half (52%) of the young people who exited GRYD Prevention services during the study period successfully completed programming.[2]

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[2] *Vera, L., & Diep, J. (2022). GRYD Prevention services: A summary of participants and services (GRYD Research Brief No. 11). Los Angeles, CA: California State University, Los Angeles. https://www.juvenilejusticeresearch.com/projects/gryd/briefs*

The GRYD Research and Evaluation Team

In order to support the growth of a citywide data infrastructure and a GRYD research agenda, the GRYD Research and Evaluation Team was established at California State University, Los Angeles, in 2015 and is housed under the Rongxiang Xu College of Health and Human Services Wellness, Education, and Research Center. The GRYD Research and Evaluation Team is headed by Director Molly Kraus and Research Director Dr. Denise Herz of Cal State LA. They oversee a broad set of teams which include research partners from the University of California, Los Angeles; the University of Southern California; and Harder+Company Community Research, an organization that helps public sector agencies further their impact.

> Participation in GRYD Prevention services increased participants'
>
> **internal resilience by 28%**
>
> external resilience by 19%, and family norms by 9%, while
>
> **decreasing their participation in gang social activities by 61%**
>
> and peer gang activities by 17%.[3]

The team has two branches, Data Management and Support, and Research and Evaluation.

Data Management and Support builds and supports a data infrastructure to provide both the GRYD Office and GRYD providers with timely information about services and ongoing technical assistance, ensuring good use of and access to data.

The Research and Evaluation branch builds and implements a GRYD research agenda and conducts studies related to this agenda which are currently released through the GRYD Research Brief Series, and informs data feedback loop training. It also bridges research with practice to continuously improve GRYD services through data findings and best practices in the field. With currently a dozen briefs published, and more to be released soon, the GRYD Research and Evaluation Team is constantly looking at targeted areas within the research to analyze GRYD data and apply these findings back into programming in coordination with the GRYD Office and GRYD providers.

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Having flexibility with our impact management solution to adjust how we're collecting data to continually reflect programming on the ground has been key, because when the data reflects the work, the providers are more interested in their data.

— **Molly Kraus, director of GRYD Research and Evaluation Team**

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3 Brantingham, P.J., Herz, D.C., & Kraus, M. (2022). *Increasing resilience to prevent association with gangs: Assessing the impact of GRYD Prevention services (GRYD Research Brief No. 12). Los Angeles, CA: California State University, Los Angeles.* https://www.juvenilejusticeresearch.com/projects/gryd/briefs

Data collection standardization across GRYD providers

Each of the 23 GRYD Zones has a designated GRYD Prevention provider that is funded to deliver GRYD Prevention services and a designated GRYD Intervention provider that is funded to deliver GRYD Intervention Family Case Management and Violence Interruption services for a total of 21 unique community-based organizations, some covering multiple GRYD Zones. In addition to these services, the GRYD Office has secured grant funding to execute special projects like youth diversion and juvenile reentry. For these projects, there are additional GRYD service providers that cover specific service areas that also align with GRYD's research and evaluation practices.

All GRYD providers across the City of Los Angeles use the same impact management software for GRYD services data collection. GRYD provides a standardized, online certification program so that GRYD provider management and staff across the city know how to use this impact management software and are using it the same way. GRYD is standardizing data collection across 21 different community-based organizations citywide, which is achieved by a combination of technical assistance strategies.

First, to encourage buy-in and use of GRYD's impact management software, the GRYD Research and Evaluation Team works alongside GRYD Office staff (i.e. program managers and coordinators) to provide ongoing support to GRYD providers. That support includes utilizing specific data metrics to highlight areas of development with the goal of creating programmatic adjustments to reach contractual objectives. It is essential that time is spent ensuring GRYD providers understand that the data is reflective of their efforts and to allow them to take ownership of it. This is done in part by highlighting that the data collected tells a story about the quality of their services and programming.

Second, an intranet created for GRYD providers serves as a clearing house of all matters related to GRYD, including all of the data collection forms, guides, and self-paced user certification training to understand how to collect data. It also houses the GRYD Policies and Procedures Handbooks, which outline the expectations for delivering services under GRYD's Comprehensive Strategy model. GRYD aims to be transparent in communicating how many assessments and activities are done per month. Thus, monthly report production and oversight of data are accessible to GRYD service providers on the intranet where they can access these materials to have constant knowledge of the services that are being provided. All of this is coordinated between the GRYD Office and the GRYD Research and Evaluation Team, which work to make sure the data is present and part of the conversation on an ongoing basis.

> **Urban Institute Evaluation Reports** establishes GRYD as a leader in gang reduction and youth development.

Finally, the GRYD Office and the GRYD Research and Evaluation Team have invested time in getting to know not just the GRYD model, but also all of the GRYD service providers, which go hand in hand. The impact management software was built out as a reflection of the GRYD Comprehensive Strategy with a large investment in understanding what the GRYD Office was trying to create.

"The tool is truly reflective of their work, which didn't happen overnight," says Carlos De Santiago, GRYD regional program manager. "Having the research and evaluation staff shadow the program coordinators when they're doing technical assistant meetings and understanding the needs of the service providers firsthand, as opposed to just looking at the database and saying, 'Well, this is what we gathered from it,' provides a level of engagement that goes beyond just the database. I think that's a huge part of what we do."

To succeed at GRYD, staff must be nimble. And that means they need solutions — like those of Bonterra Impact Management — that can be nimble with them.

"We sometimes liken being in GRYD to flying a plane while you're still building it because there's semi-constant change. For us, having flexibility with our impact management solution and being able to adjust how we're collecting data to continually reflect programming on the ground has been key. When the data reflects the work, the providers are more interested in their data," says Molly.

Improvements enabled by data-informed feedback loops

Before the GRYD Data Feedback Loop was introduced as a training mechanism, the regional program coordinators were utilizing data in technical assistant meetings to highlight areas of need or deficiencies. But not everybody was using and interpreting data consistently.

In the fall of 2017, GRYD developed a data feedback loop process to investigate citywide GRYD data trends around program drop-out. The GRYD Research and Evaluation Team analyzed GRYD data in order to identify areas or characteristics that may be related to young people who exit programming prior to successful completion.

> ## Decision-making independence increased
>
> among GRYD FCM participants receiving services which, in turn, led to a
>
> ## 34% reduction in their crime involvement.
>
> The impact of GRYD FCM services is not only significant for the well-being of participants but also for community safety and wellness.

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4 Brantingham, P.J., Herz, D.C., & Kraus, M. (2022). *The impact of GRYD Intervention Family Case Management (FCM) services on increasing decision-making independence (GRYD Research Brief No. 10). Los Angeles, CA: California State University, Los Angeles. https://www.juvenilejusticeresearch.com/projects/gryd/briefs*

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Findings were presented both as a citywide aggregate and individually for each GRYD Zone so that GRYD providers could look at their data and identify the majority of participants not completing the programming successfully.

For some GRYD providers, it was clear that participants who exited the program unsuccessfully also took much longer than average to enroll in the program. What also became evident was a domino effect of significantly higher dropout numbers among participants who engaged much later in the referral process. The most successful participants engaged with staff during the referral process, then completed enrollment and started activities right away.

Once these trends were noted, GRYD Office staff then worked collaboratively with GRYD providers to plan action steps to identify areas of development and create action plans to document these strategies as an accountability tool.

Between Jan. 1, 2016, and March 7, 2021, GRYD Community Intervention Workers (CIWs)

conducted a total of 221,992 Proactive Peacemaking activities (466,223 hours)

and took action after 3,305 violent incidents occured.[6]

All of this spurred an adjustment in speed and efficiency of their referral-to-enrollment timeline and helped the agency better engage with participants and avoid early program attrition at the front end. This is where the GRYD Data Feedback Loop Training started, and has continued to evolve over time.[5]

Moreover, data generated from feedback loops helped GRYD provider staff better understand the process of GRYD's data collection system. GRYD provider management came to realize that staff comprehension of both the GRYD model and expectations were essential to staff's successful data entry and utilization. As case managers began to understand the data, what was required of them, and the difference it was making, they became inspired to submit more timely and complete data entry into the impact management software.

For GRYD, understanding these issues has helped with time management among staff and program managers. The GRYD regional program coordinators played a huge role in supporting this as they could see firsthand how GRYD could continually make improvements in this way. As a result, teams took the process very seriously because they could see, by doing so, the positive impact the process had on GRYD services participants and in the program. As Molly explains, "Feedback loop is data to practice, to data to practice, it doesn't stop. Doing this project really brought meaning into some of that data collection for GRYD."

5 *Kraus, M., Brown, A., De Santiago, C., & Herz, D.C. (2020). GRYD Data Feedback Loop Training: Using a community-based, participatory, action research approach to building data-informed practice (GRYD Research Brief No. 7). Los Angeles, CA: California State University, Los Angeles. https://www.juvenilejusticeresearch.com/projects/gryd/briefs*

6 *Forthcoming GRYD Research Brief No. 13*

Data-informed culture boosts morale

The GRYD Data Feedback Loop Training makes connections between input and output, allowing staff to understand what the output signifies and how to use it to improve programming. This empowers GRYD provider staff by educating them on how their work helps individuals change their lives.

As a result, GRYD provider staff take pride in their work, which is evident in stories that service providers have shared to demonstrate their impact. In the past, the GRYD Office fielded hesitation about entering data. Now there is GRYD provider staff investment in data collection and input and the GRYD Office receives requests from providers for more accounts and information sources. There is a general sense among GRYD provider staff of striving to always be better as a group when it comes to accessing and understanding the data.

The GRYD office and service providers benefit from data

GRYD's data collection effort offers three important uses. First, it allows GRYD service providers to use that data, with permission, to seek additional funding opportunities and utilize the data for their own needs.

Second, the GRYD Office can see how the model is or is not being implemented in real time. They can discover whether specific GRYD provider staff need additional training. They can zero in quickly on outcomes and the causes, with the ability to explore and analyze those factors. GRYD's model focuses on a short-term, six-month framework, with meetings fulfilled each month. For Prevention Services, case managers meet once with an individual, and twice with a family in a 30-day period. For Intervention Services, case managers meet twice with an individual, and once with the family in a 30-day period. If this cadence isn't met or a client drops out of the program, GRYD can determine precisely why. The data can reflect any challenges that case managers or a GRYD provider as an entity is facing while following the model of services.

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> Having enough funds to truly invest in a robust research and evaluation system like we have allows us to continue to get bigger opportunities because we have better data to show for it.
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> — **Carlos De Santiago**, GRYD regional program manager

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This is extremely helpful for GRYD, allowing service providers to hone in on specific areas, identify gaps, and adjust in real time rather than waiting for a year-end cumulative report. The information is passed to GRYD's regional program coordinators who meet with GRYD providers monthly to review data sets, enabling quick adjustments.

Lastly, the GRYD Research and Evaluation Team provides efficient and quick reporting to the GRYD Office, which in turn can report to other Mayor's Office departments or other local government offices upon request. GRYD's presence within Los Angeles is strategically aligned with the Mayor's Office and with the outputs of the community organizations doing the work. It's crucial that GRYD has the ability to scale and provide feedback to these organizations so they can learn, adjust, and improve outcomes.

Responses by the GRYD incident response program triangle partnership

cuts gang-related retaliations by 41%

and improves public safety in communities historically impacted by high levels of gang violence.[7]

GRYD has demonstrated its value for more than a decade, continuing its funding and programming despite administration changes within the City of Los Angeles. "Having enough funds to truly invest in a robust research and evaluation system like we have allows us to continue to get bigger opportunities because we have better data to show for it," Carlos adds.

Molly explains that "the GRYD Research and Evaluation Team works closely alongside and constantly communicates with programming, working together to sustain a network of support for the agencies that are delivering GRYD services. That's unique for GRYD, and it works very well on GRYD's behalf to be able to meet these goals."

7 *Brantingham, P. J., Yuan, B., & Herz, D.C. (2020). The impact of the GRYD Incident Response Program on gang retaliations (GRYD Research Brief No. 2). Los Angeles, CA: California State University, Los Angeles. https://www.juvenilejusticeresearch.com/projects/gryd/briefs*

Summary

As leaders in data management, GRYD executes a comprehensive community care model and demonstrates its impact on the community. Using advanced technology to connect, measure, and enhance service delivery for the health and well-being of communities, GRYD creates a trusting environment in which people in need may readily receive coordinated care from multiple sources. GRYD supports the comprehensive community care model as it coordinates across people and programs, grant access and visibility for stakeholders and participants, and provides standardized measurements and accountability.

Moving forward, GRYD will continue to build and grow with a particular eye on enhancing reporting capabilities delivering more in terms of what they're reporting to GRYD contracted service providers.

Presently, the GRYD Research and Evaluation Team is rebuilding a reporting suite that will allow case managers to highlight their work in a way that is personal to them. This connects back to the feedback loop, showing not just the caseload of a service provider, but also how long they've been with GRYD, the outcomes they've impacted, and how many young people and emerging adults they've served. GRYD aims to have meaningful data to support the individuals who are doing the work on the ground, while continually setting a high bar in terms of how those individuals visualize data in reporting dashboards and how they revisit the dashboards to determine what should be included and highlighted.

GRYD is an organization that assesses internally every couple of years to observe and analyze and make plans for future change and growth.

"As an organization that is great," says Molly. "Change can be difficult, but change is necessary, and that's something that GRYD does. Having the data that we have allows us to look at it in a way that we feel is meaningful and is a step in the right direction."

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