

DREAM KEEPER INITIATIVE EVALUATION REPORT

APRIL-JUNE 2021

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INTRODUCTION

In April 2021, Homeless Children's Network (HCN) received funding from San Francisco's Dream Keeper Initiative (DKI) to provide to the Black/African American community general mental health services, mental health services for LGBTQ+ individuals, and early childhood mental health consultation. The funds augmented the services provided by HCN's Ma'at Program, which utilizes a unique Afri-centric model of mental health service provision.

The Afri-centric services provided with the additional funding not only improved behavioral health outcomes for Black/African American individuals and families in San Francisco but they also addressed the historical legacy of intergenerational racism, inequity and trauma within the community. Services supported individuals and families of African descent to *passionately and unconditionally affirm Blackness*, in addition to helping them improve mental health and functioning, increase coping skills, and improve relationships with families, educational programs, peers and community.

We found that:

- Having direct service staff who are Black/African American is extremely important to program participants.
"They understand our culture and background and they won't judge you because they understand."
- Working with program staff has a positive impact on young people's understanding and acceptance of their own blackness.
"I think [working with staff] has helped a lot because I don't know if [my daughter] had a form of self-hate, but she does show a more positive outlook on her race now."
- Program services help improve children's communication within the family.
"[My son is] way more open to talk about his feelings. Like if he's feeling sad or mad, he'll tell me about it."
- Individuals and families appreciate having access to a nonjudgmental adult with whom to talk.
"It doesn't feel like I'm talking to a stranger even though I've known [the case manager] for about two or three weeks. I could tell her about my whole life. It feels safe, you know?"
- Participating in program services helps remove the stigma of receiving mental health care.
"I felt like they're trying to be nosy and all in my business and trying to brainwash my kids but it's completely different. It's not like that. They're more supportive."



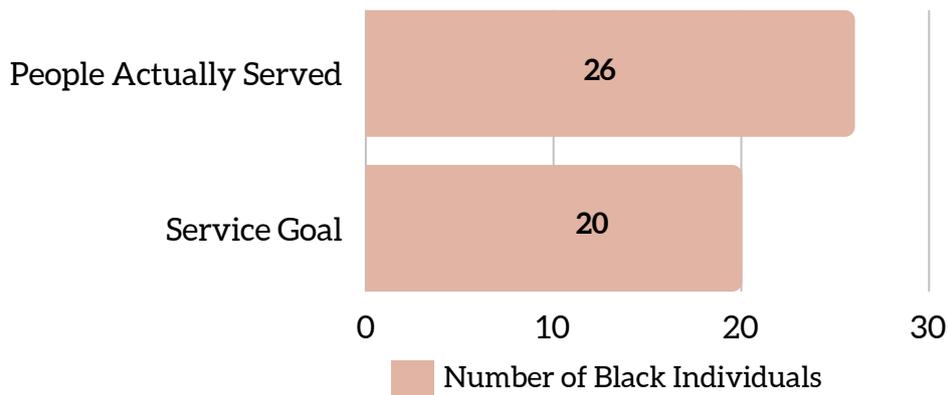
GENERAL MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES



With Dream Keeper funding, HCN was able to provide mental health services to a broad range of individuals--a total of 26--in the Black/African American community, regardless of age or family status. **This service level exceeded the outcome measure set by the City by 30%.**

The funding enabled clinicians to employ a wide range of modalities, as there were no restrictions imposed by the medical model of service delivery. Clinicians utilized individual and group therapy, case management, and healing circles, in working with Black/African American children, youth, parents, and other adults. Staff also provided services to community partners, such as educational program staff, who need assistance in better supporting and addressing the mental health needs of Black/African American youth, families, and adults.

Number of Black People Provided General Mental Health Services with Dream Keeper Funding



Examples of services provided include:

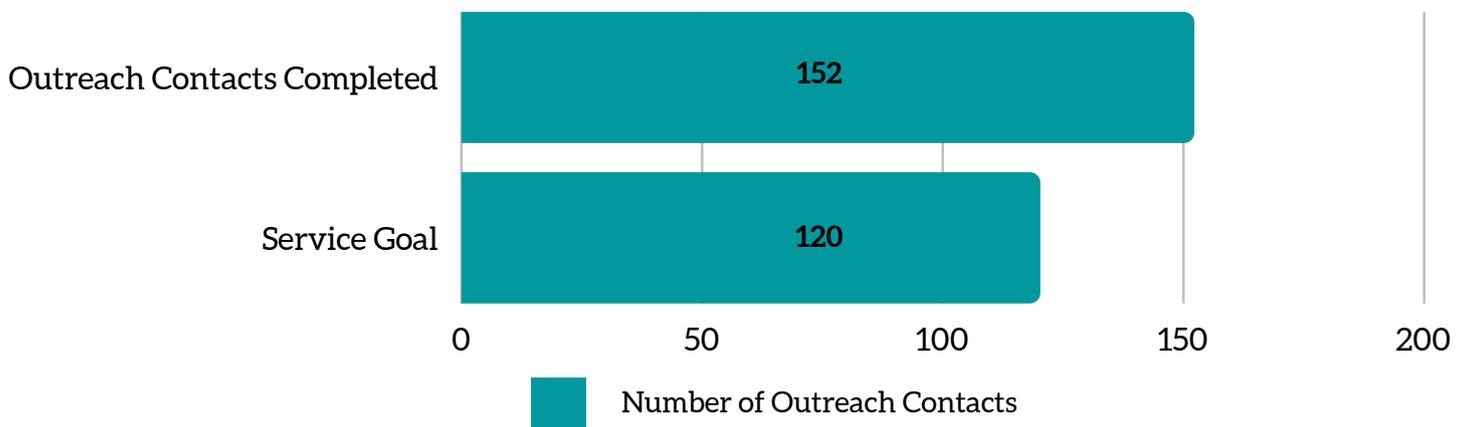
- *Youth Leadership Program.* Program staff facilitated group meetings twice per month, during which youth created a website (BlackInSF.com) where they blogged about their experiences and challenges as Black/African American youth in San Francisco.
- *Case Management.* Staff supported clients directly, built relationships with partner organizations, and created linkages between individuals and families and agencies in areas such as education, domestic violence, foster care, food, clothing, and housing.

GENERAL MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES



Program staff also continued to develop and expand the Afri-centric behavioral health model through community work. They engaged in **152 outreach calls, meetings, and communications** to potential advisors, community partners, educational programs, referral sources and others. **This service level exceeded the outcome measure set by the City by 26%.**

Number of General Mental Health Services Outreach Contacts Completed with Dream Keeper Funding



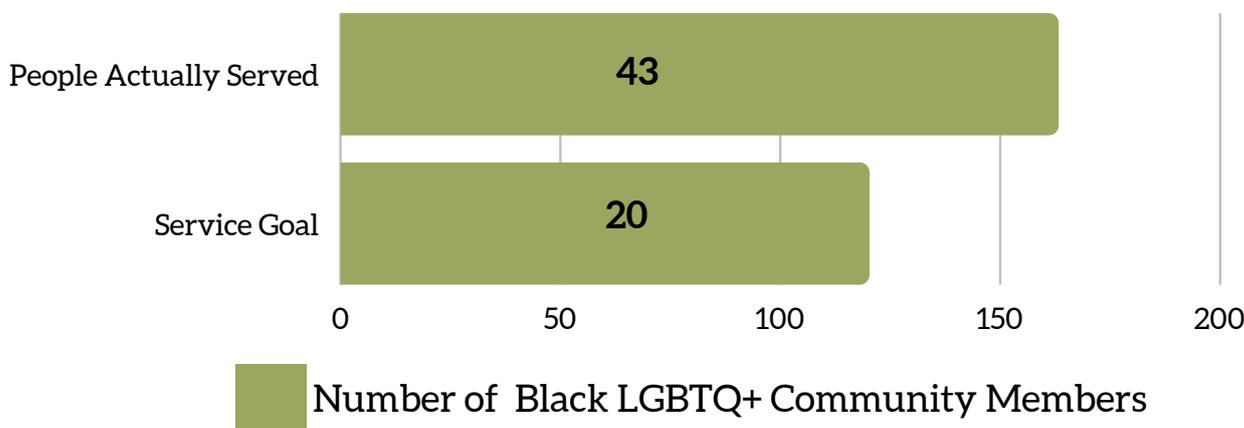
Therapists also participated in community conversations highlighting the needs of Black/African American communities, including the Black/African American LGBTQ+ community and families of children aged 0-5 years. Additionally, staff engaged with the Dream Keeper Initiative and other Black-led and Black-serving San Francisco agencies to increase the efficacy of cross-referrals and community learnings.

LGBTQ+ MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES



Homeless Children’s Network has been providing mental health services to members of the LGBTQ+ community for the past two decades through partnerships with San Francisco-based LGBTQ+ organizations, such as Our Family Coalition and SF Pride. With the additional funding and in partnership with Soul of Pride,² staff focused on three areas: (1) mental health services, (2) outreach and community engagement, and (3) cultural events. Dream Keeper funds enabled LGBTQ+ Black clinical staff to provide mental health services for **43 of the City’s Black/African American LGBTQ+ community members**. Clients included children and youth, caregivers and other adults, as well as community partners, needing support in addressing the mental health needs of Black/LGBTQ+ individuals. **This service level represents 115% over the goal set by the City.**

Number of Black LGBTQ+ Community Members Served with Dream Keeper Funding



² For more than 20 years, Soul of Pride has celebrated Black pride and worked to unite and represent the LGBTQ+ community of the African Diaspora in the Bay Area and beyond. Soul of Pride organizes the African Diaspora Stage and Village at the annual San Francisco Pride Celebration and Parade and is a critical part of influencing change and growth in areas such as artistry, economic independence, youth advocacy, and political opportunities. Throughout the year, Soul of Pride organizes events and resources for the Black LGBTQ community in the San Francisco Bay Area.

LGBTQ+ MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES



Program staff also engaged in community work to continue to develop and expand the Afri-centric behavioral health model to ensure inclusivity of all members of the Black/African American LGBTQ+ community throughout San Francisco. They participated in **163 outreach calls, meetings, and other communications** to potential advisors, community partners, educational programs, referral sources, and others, as well as in community conversations emphasizing the needs of the City's Black/African American LGBTQ+ community. **This represents a 36% increase in service over the goal set by the City.**

Number of Contacts with LGBTQ+ Community & Allies with Dream Keeper Funding



Program staff also took part in strategic planning and infrastructure design to elicit feedback from the Black/African American LGBTQ+ community, and in outreach to engage and introduce services within communities throughout San Francisco, as well as to generate referrals. Additionally, staff engaged with the Dream Keeper Initiative and other Black-led and Black-serving San Francisco agencies to increase the efficacy of cross-referrals and community learnings.

HCN also utilized Dream Keeper funds to partner with Soul of Pride to host cultural events that affirm and celebrate Black queer communities in San Francisco. At the City's Juneteenth celebration in mid-June and two Pride celebrations at the end of the month, HCN also promoted access to Afri-centric mental health resources. **Over 400 San Francisco community members** showed up on June 26 to march for Black LGBTQ+ visibility and equity as well as celebrate Black LGBTQ+ contributions to society. On June 27, **over 1,000 San Francisco community members** participated in celebrating Black LGBTQ+ culture.

EARLY CHILDHOOD CONSULTATION



Dream Keeper Initiative funding made possible the expansion of early childhood mental health consultation into the Black/African American community in San Francisco. In addition to working with young Black/African American children and their families, clinicians worked directly with early childhood staff to offer valuable support, feedback, and advice on how to implement effective programs for their Black/African-American clients aged 0-5 years to ensure healthy development during this crucial developmental stage of life. Services included supervision and training, individual and group early intervention, and individual and group mental health services, and reached **33 individuals**.

Program staff also engaged in strategic planning and infrastructure design for Afri-centric services for Black/African American families with children aged 0-5 years and their early childhood providers. In addition, they completed **60 outreach communications** with shelters, Family Resource Centers, Early Education Centers, educational programs, child care centers, the Dream Keeper Initiative and other Black-led and Black-serving San Francisco agencies to inform them of trainings, consultation, and direct mental health services to Black/African American families, including LGBTQ+ families, with children birth to five.

Examples of services provided include:

- *Case Management and Psychoeducation.* Program staff engaged in conversations with parents about early childhood experiences--about the challenges they would be facing--and provided parents resources specific to their needs pertaining to child rearing, child development, and reinforcing positive behavior.
- *Staff Support.* Program staff supported substance abuse treatment and educational staff to build capacity around mental health issues and how to respond to them, as well as know how to refer to outside services.



PROGRAM IMPACT

Homeless Children's Network received a large expansion of funding through the Dream Keeper Initiative just three short months ago. In our experience, it often takes community-based programs several months to expand staff and services. In this case, however, HCN expanded in a timely manner. Moreover, where there were clear service goals, HCN exceeded expectations, going 25%-115% over service goals. This reflects strong leadership, vision, and organizational capacity.

Because HCN responded so quickly, Ma'at services via DKI funding is meeting an urgent need for Afri-centric whole person wellness in the Black/African American communities throughout San Francisco. Moreover, HCN has invested with sustainability and deep community impact in mind, not for a short sprint or burst of services. They have recruited, trained, and have staff working with Black families in just about every neighborhood throughout the City.

The range of services that HCN is providing is also broad. On one hand, they are linking Black people, including children birth to five, to urgently needed culturally affirming Afri-centric mental health services. Through their larger community events, they are also spreading joy to hundreds of people. No other organization could have organized a Pride month event for over 1,000 Black LGBTQ+ community members. It truly was the "Soul of Pride."



The expansion of these quality services is largely due to the structure of DKI funding. One reason the DKI funding is so unique is that it is not attached to Medi-Cal in any way and allows HCN to close gaps in service and increase equity of access. This is of critical importance because even the Ma'at funding that is not directly attached to Medi-Cal and supports relationship building and outreach ripens into Medi-Cal services in most cases. In contrast, the DKI funding embraces a broader community outreach effort that allows HCN to reach those in the Black community in San Francisco that have been out of reach and lost in the gaps before this.

Over the last three months, HCN has built relationships of trust throughout the Black community in San Francisco based on this expansive model.

"Staff has been in conversation with providers, parents, stakeholders, and community members spreading the word that they can depend on HCN and Ma'at through June 2022," explains Executive Director Dr. April Silas.

"Families, parents, children, youth, and providers have consented to services based on this understanding. There has been extensive buy-in and support from our communities. Providers and community partners have been helping with outreach and getting the word out about these services."

Ongoing DKI funding will allow the breadth and depth of the HCN services to continue.



GRATITUDE

Homeless Children's Network (HCN) staff wishes to express their profound and unending gratitude to San Francisco's Mayor London Breed and President Shamann Walton's insightful envisioning, passionate and brilliant leadership, and standard-raising implementation of The Dream Keeper Initiative!

HCN additionally offers a heartfelt extension of infinite gratitude to Director Dr. Davis for her unprecedented facilitation of City-wide conversations, including multiple city departments, CBOs, and subcommittee partnerships, to ensure a panoramic engagement process that encouraged the voice, insight, and feedback from all stakeholders.

The culmination of this City's community leadership and vision-holders, embraced within an affirming and fiercely committed Black community, is paving the path for our families, children, adults, and neighborhoods to new heights of excellence.

Now is the time to deepen the daily commitment among partners, work heart to heart with all aspects of the community in mind, align our strategies of transformation, and author our future with programming, ideas, services, and resources—all that will be sustained for generations to come!



On behalf of every Black/African American Beloved in any way touched by our commitment, or in any way partnering with us, we say...

Thank you for allowing us to journey in community with you!

Together we are generationally connected and together we shall continue to strengthen!

And So It Is!