

Boston Opportunity Youth Collaborative, 2015

Collective impact

As a collective impact collaborative, the Opportunity Youth Collaborative (OYC) plans to increase Boston's capacity to serve opportunity youth (OY), disconnected youth and young adults ages 16-24. The OYC conducts research and strategic planning, then pilots new practices and seeks to influence systems change. Our goal is to create supported pathways through postsecondary to career by knitting together programs and supports in a longitudinal trajectory.

Changes we hope to effect:

- Scale-up through community college access and systems change (more student support and career connections at the colleges)
- On-ramps to adult training programs for OY
- Expanded postsecondary transition support among high school equivalency (HSE, formerly GED) and alternative diploma programs
- Public data and OYC database to better track OY pathways and progress

Pilot pathway programming

The OYC's first pilot intervention is the Connection Center, funded through national Aspen Institute and Jobs for the Future (JFF) grants. The Connection Center is a one-stop resource for 20-24 year olds who have a high school credential, who constitute the largest segment of OY in Boston. The Center will be the catalyst for a set of college and career pathways that will serve 150 opportunity youth in 2015. Our theory of action is that a vigorous outreach and referral process through the Connection Center will provide a visible stream of OY customers to community colleges and training programs. That stream, combined with our collective research, planning, and advocacy activities, will drive colleges and training agencies to adapt programming for these young adults.

Connection Center: As the Connection Center provider, X-Cel Education will assess clients over several visits; identify assets, barriers, career interests, and personal interests; and develop a personalized plan for each youth. The X-Cel team will provide a supported hand-off to their next step, following the young person's progress for at least the first year and allowing youth to return for guidance at any time.

Pathway partners: The following partners have committed to take young people through the next leg of the journey, through either postsecondary, training, or employment activities. The first four partners are funded through the Aspen and JFF grants, and the last group includes OYC members providing in-kinds services that align with their individual organizational missions. The OYC will use learning from the Connection Center and pathways to guide its planning and advocacy.

College Bound Dorchester will provide postsecondary bridging and retention support for up to 45 opportunity youth per year.

Inquilinos Boricuas en Acción (IBA) will provide postsecondary bridging and retention support for up to 25 young people per year.

Jewish Vocational Service (JVS) will offer occupational training in its signature pharmacy technician program to eight Connection Center referrals per year.

Asian American Civic Association (AACA) will offer employability training, employment services, and referrals for occupational skills training for 65 opportunity youth per year.

OYC members providing individual in-kind services include Boston Career Link, Boston Youth Service Network, Community Work Services, Freedom House, and Year Up, among others.