



Effective Strategies – Equitable Systems – Strong Communities

## Bringing Youth Voices to the Forefront: Using Research to Inform Responsive Practice and Policies

Brandi Gilbert, PhD

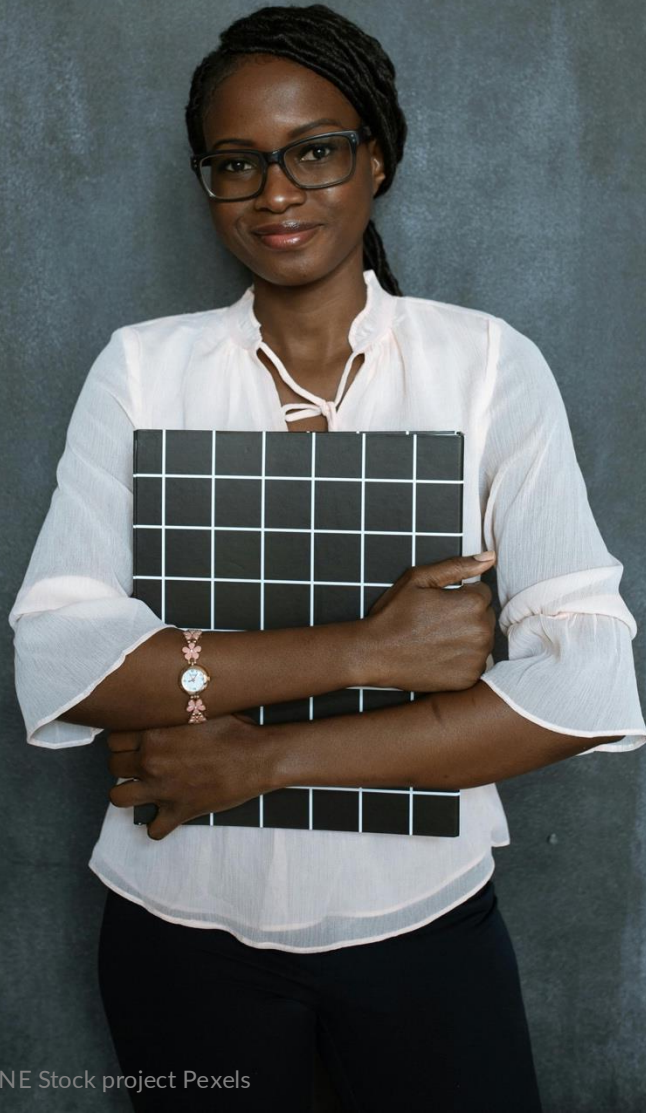
DaVonti' Haynes, PhD, MSW

Roger Rennekamp, PhD

Joshua Childs, PhD

# Today's Takeaways

1. Importance of moving research into practice
2. Importance of and ways to engage and amplify the voices of youth and young people
3. Insights on addressing systemic challenges impacting youth and young people
4. Insights on how to use research findings to guide practice and policy improvements



# Meet Community Science

Effective Strategies. Equitable Systems. Strong Communities.



Community Science is an award-winning research and development organization that works with governments, foundations, and non-profit organizations on solutions to social problems through community and other systems changes fostering learning and improved capacity for social change.



A BCT Partners Company



# Welcome

Your Hosts:



**Brandi Gilbert, PhD**  
Senior Associate  
Community Science



**DaVonti' Haynes, PhD, MSW**  
Managing Associate  
Community Science

Your Panel:



**Roger Rennekamp, PhD**  
Extension Health Director  
Cooperative Extension  
Foundation



**Joshua Childs, PhD**  
Associate Professor  
The University of Texas at Austin



How do you  
ensure your  
research is ready  
to inform policy  
and transform  
practice?

# From Research to Responsive Practice



## House Bill 5213

An Act Concerning Disconnected Youth was passed by the CT legislator

## 119K Commission

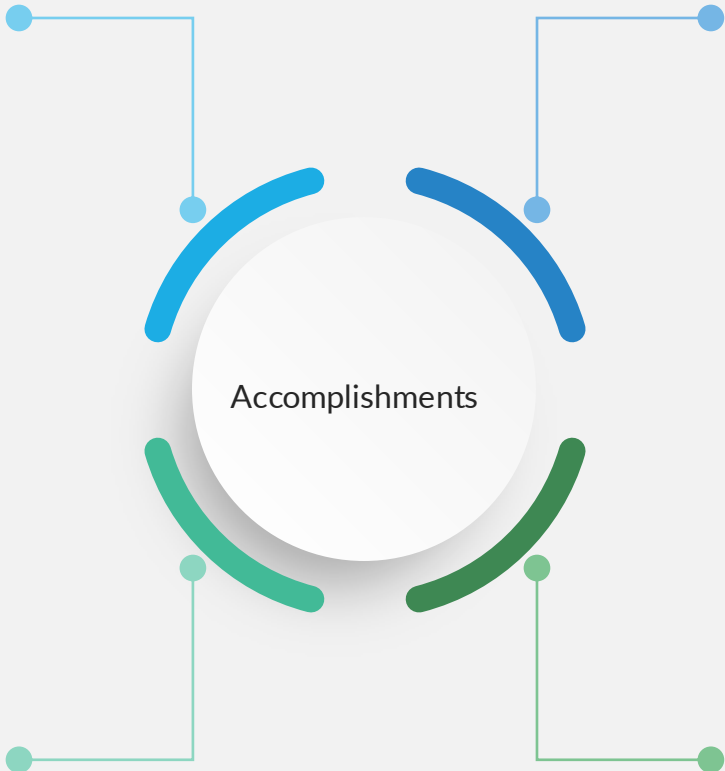
The Connecticut Conference of Municipalities formed this group to develop strategies to mitigate youth disconnection

## A Bold New Plan

The 119K Commission released the “Young People First” report, detailing 4 strategic pillars and 22 aligned actions on how to reconnect 60,000 disconnected youth

## Youth Voice

Youth and young people who have experienced disconnection have presented at national conferences and co-authored blogs and articles



# Key Points to Ensure Research Informs Policy and Transforms Practice

## Engage

Engage in strategies and practices that involve those with **relatable lived experience** in the research design, recruitment, analysis, and reporting

## Amplify

Focus on **amplifying the voices, stories, and lived experiences** of those who matter the most and are central to the research

## Address

Be sure your recommendations are **addressing a critical problem** related to your findings and **focuses on ways to improve conditions**

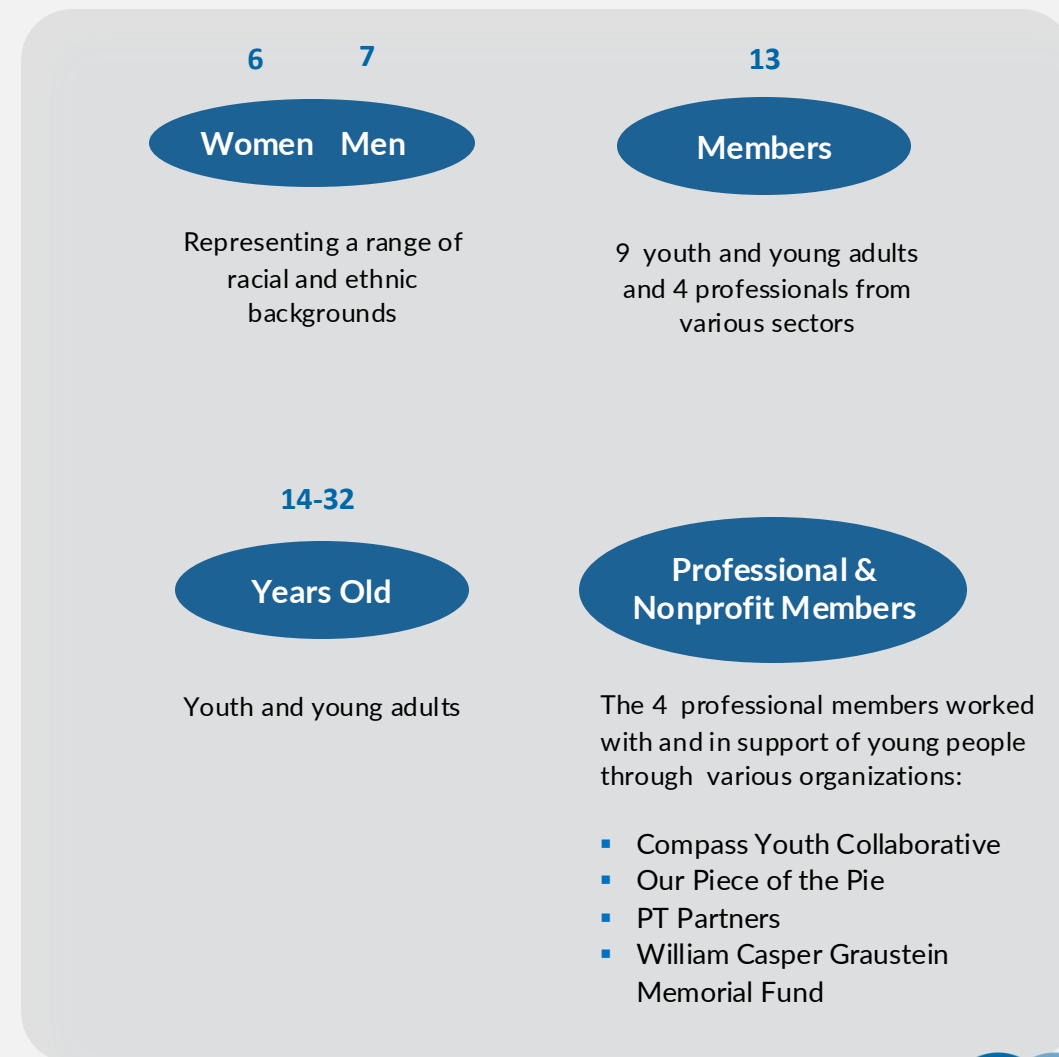
## Guide

**Incorporate the use of guidelines to offer actionable steps** within your recommendations to inform practice and policy

# Engage Those With Lived Experiences

Through this study, we developed and worked with a **Community Advisory Group (CAG)** that:

- Acted as an advisory body to the research team
- Comprised of young people from different backgrounds (e.g., racial/ethnic, gender) and adults who work with youth across different settings (e.g., community, philanthropy, direct services)
- Deepened the research team's understanding of the lived experiences of young people who have been disconnected from school and work, including understanding their needs and aspirations
- Informed the research team's decision-making, especially related to methods for outreach, recruitment, data collection, and the authenticity of the report narrative
- Ensured the findings were culturally relevant and responsive to community needs





# Amplify Their Voices

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Focus on amplifying the voices, stories, and lived experiences of those who matter the most and are central to the research

## Through our study, we sought to understand:

- How youth experiencing disconnection view themselves and their community
- The kinds of successes/challenges youth experience
- Resources youth consider useful to support progress toward their goals

## Questions were aimed at understanding the stories of young people who are not connected to work or school:

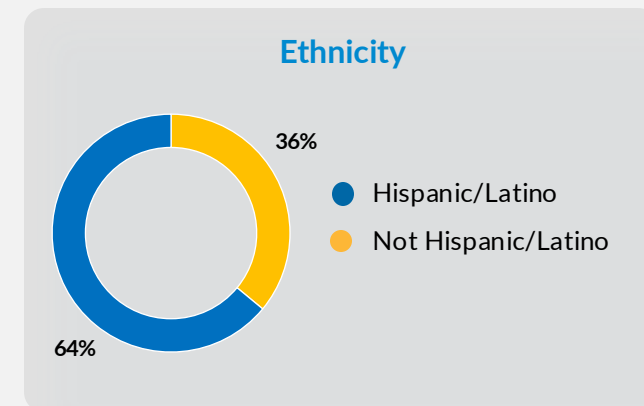
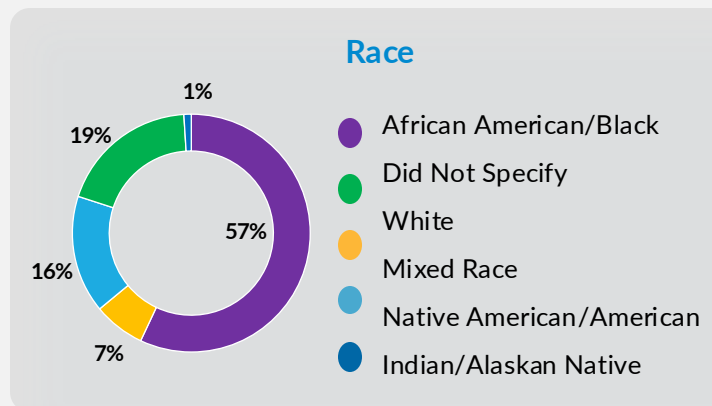
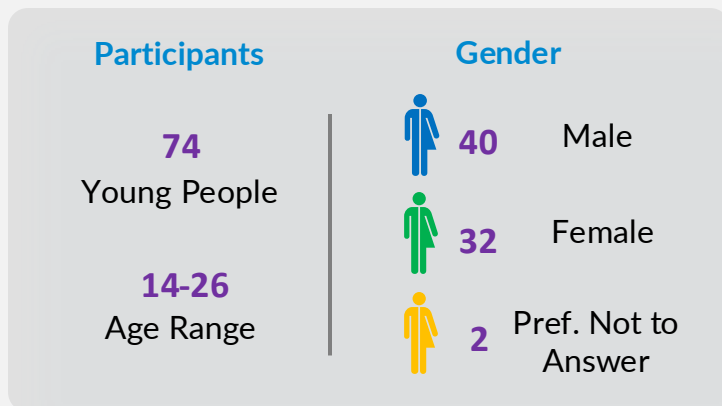
- Experience living in their specific neighborhood or community
- History with different systems (e.g., education, housing, child welfare)
- Plans and hope for the future (goals and aspirations)

## Our Approach

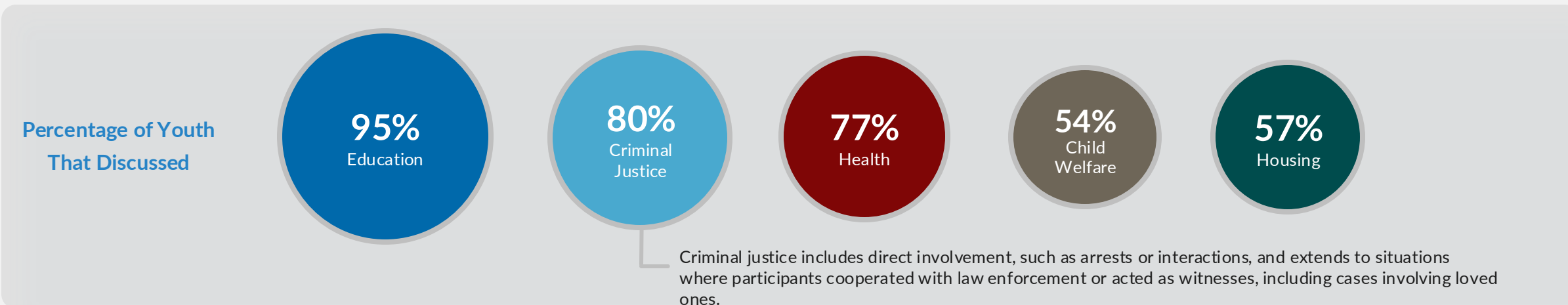
- We conducted 74 in-depth interviews with youth, across 7 cities, to capture first-hand experiences and perspectives

# Who Informed Our Work & Their Focus

## Demographics

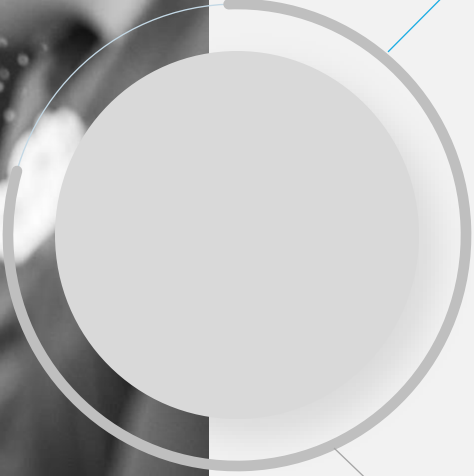


## Systems



# Address Key Challenges

Recommendations should address a critical problem related to your findings and focuses on ways to improve conditions

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- **Housing Instability**
  - **Older Youth and Trauma**
  - **Mental vs. Holistic Healthcare**

# Guide By Using Framework For Policy And Practice

Develop clear, actionable guidelines to inform policy changes based on research findings by **incorporating the use of guidelines to offer actionable steps** within your recommendations to inform practice and policy

## Housing Instability

- Expand the availability of affordable housing options via zoning
- Create more comprehensive state and local housing support services
- Improve collaboration between the housing and child welfare systems

## Older Youth and Trauma

- Shift focus from punishment to rehabilitation and trauma-informed care
- Provide emotional support and continuity for youth by strengthening transitional support communication for youth aging out of services
- Promote partnerships across healthcare, housing, and employment sectors to create a holistic safety net for older youth

## Mental vs. Holistic Healthcare

- Expand access to affordable healthcare coverage for youth and young people
- Improve communication, empathy, and cultural competence in healthcare interactions
- Promote trauma-informed healthcare practices by training providers to recognize and respond to unique needs of youth who have experienced trauma

Policymakers and practitioners now have targeted, research-based strategies and recommendations to address youth disconnection and create a foundation for ongoing, responsive support systems. These recommendations have led to policy discussions around housing support, mental health services, and trauma-informed care with a particular emphasis on reconnecting youth to prosocial institutions.



# Panel Discussion

1. **Your Work**: How do you use **research to inform policies and programs** that **uplift youth voices**?
2. **Examples**: Can you share a **specific example of a successful collaboration** between researchers and practitioners or community members that led to both strengthened research outcomes and practical, real-world impact? What were the key things that made this collaboration successful? (feel free to reflect on any challenges you overcame or tried to overcome)
3. **Centering Youth Voices**: In your work, how have you ensured that **community voices, particularly those of youth, are integrated** into the research process, from design to dissemination? How has this influenced the outcomes and ensured that the research is addressing community and youth needs?
4. **Advice**: Based on your experience, what **steps** should researchers and organizations take **to ensure that their work has a meaningful impact on policies, practices, and the broader community**, particularly in addressing the needs of youth?





Q & A



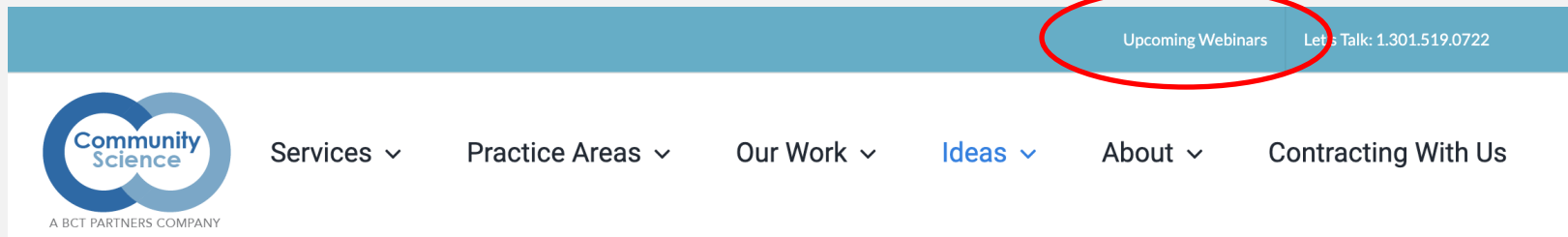
Effective Strategies  
Equitable Systems  
Strong Communities

# Access to Resources & Upcoming Talks

- Resources from this Webinar:
  - Available to newsletter subscribers
  - Emailed within one business week of the webinar & Includes all links on this page.
- Upcoming Webinars From Community Science:

Intergenerational Community Advisory Boards as a Tool to Support Research to Practice Efforts  
11/14/24 1pm EST

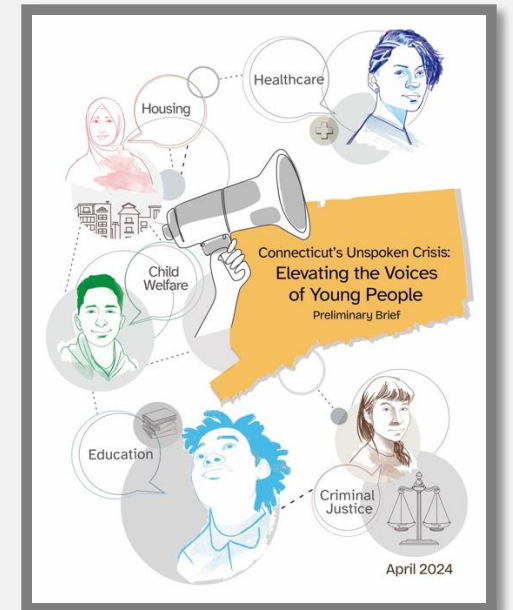
Register for the Webinar Here: [communityscience.com](https://communityscience.com)



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