

Bay Area Parent Leadership Action Network (Bay Area PLAN) Oakland, CA

SNAPSHOT

Overview

Bay Area PLAN was founded in 2004 and serves Bay Area families by striving to actively involve parents in their child's education in order to transform schools.

Mission

Bay Area PLAN is a social justice organization that develops the leadership and builds the power of parents to transform schools so that all children achieve student success. Our vision is for every student to graduate high school ready for college, career and life. Informed, active parents are essential to making this vision a reality. – Bay Area PLAN website

Constituency

- Youth (0-12) and adults (18-65+)
- African American
- Latino
- Asian (Pan Asian including Southeast Asian)
- LGBTQ
- Foster children
- Relative caregivers
- Homeless
- People with disabilities (learning, physical, or mental)
- Immigrant
- Undocumented
- Formerly incarcerated
- Low income



Local Conditions & Critical Issues Impacting 0-5 Childhood Health in Oakland

Housing & Displacement

"I think the biggest issue in the Bay Area regardless of community at this point is housing and economic stability. I haven't met one parent that isn't stressed about it. It's a stress because you don't know if your housing is secure, and if it is secure, it's probably inadequate. Then if you can't find stable housing, will you end up in the tents? If you already live in tents, will the cops stop you if you live in your car? Can you make it to work? There's a significant level of stress just related to stability in housing... [it has become] the number one driver of all other health issues in the Bay Area community at this point." – Pecolia Manigo, Executive Director

Economic Stability

Twenty percent of children live in poverty in Oakland.¹

State of Education

Especially early childhood education.

"You have a significant number of kids who don't have access to that formal care system, either because there aren't enough slots or because people don't know where those slots are at. Then you have a significant, even greater number of families who prefer informal care because they culturally would like their children to be raised by their families in their zero to five years and have not seen a cultural match in the formal care system that would allow them to trust the system to have their kids... While we also know that no matter whether kids get through formal or informal, they're all coming into the K-12 system not prepared for school. ... We want universal childcare that at minimum, ensures the children are coming in with some basics covered so that their transition into the K-12 system, which is a very rough transition, is not so difficult and not so stark when it comes down to dividing kids by class, ethnicity and zip code."

"There have been major elements of fighting for higher minimum wage and pushing the resource threshold...so that people don't end up losing resources just because they're getting paid a better wage; this has been another stress factor for a lot of people...communities shouldn't lose access to valuable resources that would allow them to be healthy and thrive."

- Pecolia Manigo, Executive Director

Current Wellness & Safety Efforts

Families for Early Success—program that helps families of young children (0-5) know their rights and develop the skills necessary to better navigate the formal childcare and k-12 educational systems.

“What has been consistent in the 13 years that we’ve been in existence is that, at the end of the day, parents protect their children. That doesn’t change across culture, that doesn’t change across economic status, it doesn’t change across ethnicity. In order to protect your kid, you’ve got to know some basic skills, period. So that’s the primary focus of our zero to five program—to make sure that families know how to protect themselves, protect their kids, that they know their rights.”

Leaders for Engaged and Active Parents (LEAP Program)—family engagement and school transformation program that involves shared decision-making between parents, teachers, and principals.

Leadership Equity Advocacy and Democracy (LEAD Program)—organizing program that continues to develop parent leaders’ skills and power to create safe and equitable schools.

“The LEAD organizing program provides leadership development city wide so that parents and communities learn how to organize, run campaigns and then are able to be effective buffers or soldiers when things like budget cuts or political decisions get made at the school board level.”

Key Indicators of Childhood Health in Oakland

34.4%

of children grades 5, 7, and 9 are overweight or obese.²

69%

of Oakland 3rd graders have experienced some form of dental disease, including 31% with untreated cavities.²



East and West Oakland have some of the highest emergency department and hospitalization rates in Alameda County overall for causes that are linked to air pollution, including childhood asthma.³

Bay Area PLAN Accomplishments in Wellness & Safety

Formalizing a capacity building program

“The experts on our campaign victories are us. If we win a policy, we’ve designed it. We actually know what we want—that system, that program, that procedure—to look like. You don’t need to go and hire some other consultant that didn’t design this, that’s got to come interview us and say, ‘Well, what do you want us to do for the school system?’ No, no, no, you come to us.”

Allies/Partnerships Working on Children’s Health

- Causa Justa::Just Cause – Oakland, CA <https://cjjc.org/>
- East Bay Alliance for Sustainable Economy – Oakland, CA <http://workingeastbay.org/>
- East Bay Asian Youth Center – Oakland, CA <https://ebayc.org/>
- Oakland Communities Organizing – Oakland, CA <http://www.oaklandcommunity.org/>
- AYPAL – Oakland, CA <http://aypal.org/>
- Black Organizing Project – Oakland, CA <http://www.blackorganizingproject.org/>
- Parent Voices Oakland – Oakland, CA <http://www.pvoakland.org/>
- Lotus Bloom – Oakland, CA <http://www.lotusbloomfamily.org/>



Community Defined “Best Practices” to Improve Childhood Health

Transformative Campaigning

“I can't stress [enough] the power of campaigns. Really making sure that your organizing is purposeful, strategic and able to move an ideology forward, a different ideology than what the current system holds is critical. We call that transformative campaigning, transformative organizing. There are lots of different terms in the field but ultimately, we're going to push this value into the system and therefore this system is going to have this impact. That campaigns are focused around those dynamics is critical.”

Parent Leadership

“The second ‘best practice’ is the recognition that our parent leaders are phenomenal. Our programming is centered in parent leadership; we are the experts...and we're going to be at school [and] in the community for a while, right? So, focusing our leadership on parents is critical because they're going to make sure that the transformation that's supposed to happen in a system is truly going to happen.”

Follow-through after the campaign win

“We can't just win campaigns and policy changes and then depend upon the system to execute it on its own. There has to be a hand-holding to ensure that [the] policy as we designed, as we intended or that system change, that protocol change is implemented in accordance to the way we designed it. We cannot continue to perpetuate this myth that once we get the campaign victory our work is done. It's never done.”

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2. ChangeLab Solutions. (May 2014) The Health and Economic Impacts of Obesity in Alameda County. Retrieved from https://www.acgov.org/board/bos_calendar/documents/DocsAgendaReg_7_14_14/HEALTH%20CARE%20SERVICES/Regular%20Calendar/Alameda_County_Report_Exec_Summ_Obesity_Rpt.pdf
3. Alameda County Public Health Department. (2015, September 3). East and West Oakland Health Data Existing Cumulative Health Impacts. Retrieved from <http://www.acphd.org/media/401560/cumulative-health-impacts-east-west-oakland.pdf>