



Oakland County, Michigan

Community Resources for Youth Gap Analysis

July 2025

About the Crime and Justice Institute

The Crime and Justice Institute (CJI), a division of Community Resources for Justice, bridges the gap between research and practice with data-driven solutions that drive bold, transformative improvements in adult and youth justice systems. With a reputation built over many decades for innovative thinking, a client-centered approach, and impartial analysis, CJI assists agency leaders and practitioners in developing and implementing effective policies that achieve better outcomes and build stronger, safer communities. CJI works with local, state, tribal, and national justice organizations to provide nonpartisan policy analysis, implementation consulting, capacity-building assistance, and research services to advance evidence-based practices and create systems-level change.

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Acknowledgments

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This report was prepared by Leila Khelfaoui and Jasmine J. Jackson, with assistance from Valerie Meade, Amanda Coscia, Robert Flores, Shoba Thirukkovalur, and Ashley Neufeld.



Table of Contents

SECTION I: Introduction.....	4
Background.....	4
Scope.....	5
Methodology.....	5
Limitations.....	5
SECTION II: Resource Landscape in Oakland County.....	6
Current Status of Resources.....	6
Expanding Community Support for Justice-Involved Youth.....	13
Oakland County's Shared Vision.....	14
SECTION III: Looking Forward.....	15
Building a Collaborative and Strengths-Based Support Network.....	15
Support Network Framework.....	15
Considerations for Advancement.....	16
Conclusion.....	18
Appendix A: Oakland County Juvenile Justice Reform Implementation Team.....	19
Appendix B: Gap Analysis Community Resources.....	20
Endnotes.....	26

SECTION I:

Introduction

Background

In 2023, Michigan Lieutenant Governor Garlin Gilchrist signed the bipartisan ‘Justice for Kids and Communities’ bill package into law. This comprehensive youth justice reform legislative package aims to improve youth outcomes, enhance public safety, and optimize resources through community-based services and strategic decision-making. To begin aligning policies and practices with the reform, key stakeholders in Oakland County—including representatives from the executive’s office, local judiciary, law enforcement agencies, child and youth services, behavioral health providers, and community partners—established the Oakland County Juvenile Justice Implementation Team.ⁱ This multi-disciplinary team collaborates to assess, improve, and advance youth justice practices and policies in the County, with a focus on research and data-driven best practices.

As part of their efforts, Oakland County partnered with the Crime and Justice Institute (CJI) to provide technical assistance in developing a community resource inventory. The inventory will include community-based programs, organizations, and services located within Oakland County for youth aged 10 to 18 and their families, with the goals of increasing awareness, improving service coordination, and addressing any gaps in resources.

The Inventory Must Meet 3 Core Criteria:

1. Be informed by a collaborative system-mapping process;
2. Include programs that serve justice-involved youth as well as broader positive youth development opportunities;
3. Be designed as a living document—easily updated, searchable, shareable, and capable of integrating with other databases or systems.

The purpose of this report is to evaluate the availability and accessibility of community resources for youth; particularly those that are justice-involved youth in Oakland County. It identifies available resources, the various strengths and gaps across services, programing and stakeholder collaboration, highlighting areas that need development and enhancement. In addition, this report outlines stakeholders’ and youth’s goals for Oakland County’s resource inventory and offers research in best practices for coordinating and delivering supports for youth and families and offers strategies for effective and sustainable improvements.

i. A complete list of Implementation Team members is included in [Appendix A](#)

Scope

A gap analysis identifies discrepancies between current resources and community goals, enabling stakeholders to make data-driven decisions that improve resource allocation and foster collaboration. By highlighting unmet needs and service gaps, stakeholders can develop targeted strategies to expand access, enhance coordination, and promote equitable resource distribution. In Oakland County, this gap analysis focuses on resources funded by the State, County, local municipalities, and private sources serving County residents. The review includes 80 publicly documented programs and organizations, providing a representative, though not exhaustive, sample to identify service gaps.ⁱⁱ

For this report, a resource is defined as any support that positively impacts the growth, development, and well-being of youth and families. Many organizations offer multiple services - for example, combining recreation, mentorship, basic needs assistance, and educational or employment support. The qualitative findings and data presented here aim to equip the Oakland County Juvenile Justice Implementation Team, system stakeholders, and community partners with a clear, data-informed foundation to address resource gaps, improve service coordination, and ensure the inventory reflects community needs. This analysis also supports strategic resource allocation and collaboration, strengthening the continuum of care in alignment with the County's priorities and the goals of the 2023 'Justice for Kids and Communities' legislation.

Methodology

CJI used a multifaceted approach to conduct a comprehensive gap analysis of youth resources across Oakland County. This included integrating stakeholder input, youth engagement, and publicly available data to build a well-rounded understanding of the current resource landscape and the unique needs of youth and families. CJI conducted 30 individual and focus group interviews with diverse stakeholders from areas such

as diversion programs, community and residential supervision, law enforcement, courts, child welfare, mental health, workforce development, housing, food assistance, recreation, mentorship, and philanthropy. These conversations highlighted both strengths and challenges in service delivery and access while reflecting the County's commitment to collaboration. CJI also engaged directly with justice-involved youth to incorporate their lived experiences and ensure their voices informed the analysis.

To supplement these perspectives, CJI reviewed publicly available resource materials including websites, brochures, and agency directories. Direct outreach to organizations helped verify and expand the inventory of services. Additionally, demographic, socioeconomic, and educational data were analyzed to provide context for community needs and identify potential resource gaps. Finally, CJI examined existing research on best practices for supporting at-risk and justice-involved youth. These insights guided recommendations focused on improving coordination, collaboration, and communication across Oakland County's youth-serving systems.

Limitations

While this gap analysis offers valuable insights into service availability and access, several limitations should be noted. The analysis relies primarily on publicly available data, which may omit smaller grassroots or informal programs with limited online presence. Geographic disparities within Oakland County also pose challenges, as resources are often concentrated in populated areas, potentially masking barriers faced by rural residents. Additionally, the perspectives gathered from stakeholders, youth, and families may not fully represent all regions of the County. Finally, this assessment focuses on service availability and accessibility but does not evaluate program effectiveness, quality, or outcomes, limiting understanding of how these factors influence access and impact.

ii. A complete list of resources reviewed is included in [Appendix B](#)

SECTION II:

Resource Landscape in Oakland County

Current Status of Resources

Oakland County has many strengths, including a wide network of service providers and well-established education and employment programs for youth. However, there are several areas where County's resources could be improved, including a lack of coordination among providers, uneven access to services, and insufficient supports tailored specifically to youth. The following section outlines the resources currently available across the County and highlights service gaps—areas where further development or enhancement is needed to better serve youth and families.

Oakland County has a strong network of community organizations that help youth and families access basic needs, however limited coordination leads to fragmented services and duplicated efforts.

While Oakland County has a robust network of community organizations supporting youth and families, most services such as food, shelter, clothing, and other essential resources are concentrated in urban areas, particularly Pontiac, and few are specifically tailored to meet the unique needs of youth. Staff who work closely with youth emphasized that connecting youth and families to essential services goes beyond adding more programs.

For example, [Lighthouse of Oakland County](#) is the only shelter in the county dedicated to serving youth aged 10 to 17 in crisis. [CARE House of Oakland County](#) offers comprehensive services to victims of child abuse and neglect, but shelters operated by agencies like the [Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency \(OLHSA\)](#) and the [Oakland County Housing Resource Center](#) typically require youth to be accompanied by a parent or guardian. Other providers including the [Department of Health and Human Services](#), [HAVEN Oakland](#), [Oakland Family Services](#), and [Oakland HOPE](#) focus primarily on serving adults or families as a whole, with limited youth-specific programming.



Basic Needs Programs

Pontiac

Lighthouse: Emergency food, housing assistance, and youth programs

Honor Community Health: Sliding-scale medical, dental, and behavioral health services

Southfield

Common Ground: 24/7 crisis services, including youth shelter and mental health support

Michigan Works! Southfield Office: Youth job training and employment support

Novi

Food Pantries & School-Based Support: Local churches and schools provide meals and basic supplies

Royal Oak

Blessings in a Backpack: Food assistance for school-aged children

Holly

Holly Area Schools: Offer free/reduced lunch, counseling, and crisis referrals

Ferndale & Berkley

Local School Districts: Partner with nonprofits for food assistance, hygiene products, and tutoring

Several community-based organizations, such as the Baldwin Center, Jewish Family Services, God’s Helping Hands, Neighbor for Neighbor, Inc., and the Pontiac Collective Impact Partnership, help connect families to food, clothing, hygiene supplies, and school materials. However, their reach is often geographically limited, and capacity constraints prevent broader service delivery. Pop-up efforts like food and clothing drives, often operated by neighboring Wayne County, are inconsistent and lack centralized scheduling or location information.

This scarcity of youth-specific programs, coupled with fragmented efforts and uneven distribution of resources highlights the need for more coordinated service delivery. Community partners and system stakeholders acknowledge that operating in silos has limited their impact. There is growing momentum and enthusiasm for increased collaboration across agencies and county lines. Strengthening coordination among local organizations and neighboring counties would improve equitable access to critical services and lead to better outcomes for vulnerable youth and their families.

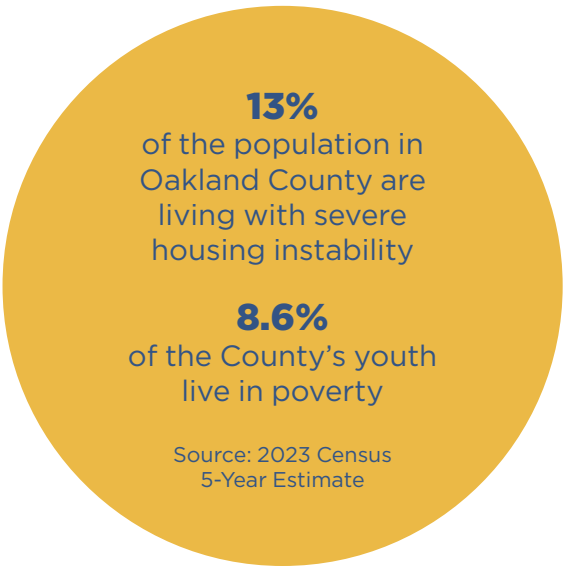
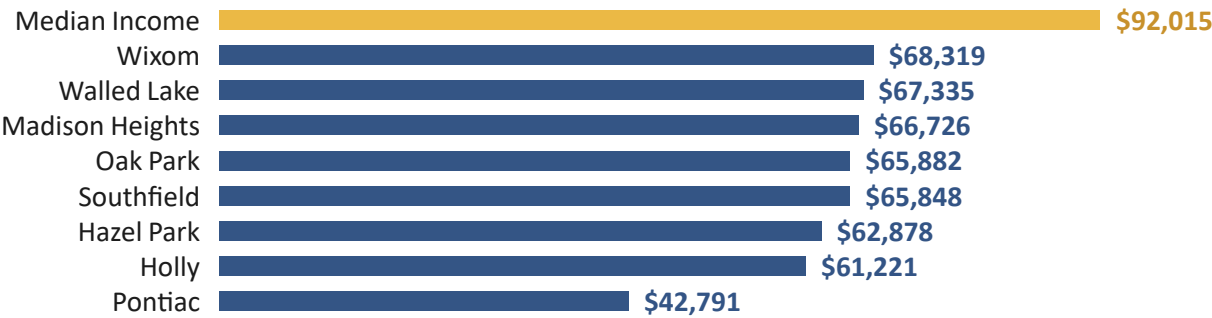


Figure 1. Median Household Income by Community

Despite a median household income of \$92,015, many communities in Oakland County face significantly *lower incomes and greater unmet needs*.



Limited transportation options in rural areas and public transit fees leave families and youth without reliable access to essential resources and programs.

Oakland County’s vast geography, spanning 907 square miles, creates challenges in youth resource access, with resources concentrated in urban areas and limited transportation options in rural and suburban areas.

Many low-income families struggle to afford transit, further restricting access to needed programs. Some organizations, like the Pontiac Community Foundation (PCF) offers transportation assistance to local youth to access PCF programs. Stakeholders have also shared that other programs may offer similar support, but without clear public information, these resources remain largely unknown to many in the community.

Public school bus services are also limited, particularly in rural areas and for students that may live outside the bounds of their schools' transportation range. As a result, many families must rely on public transportation, which stakeholders suggest contributes to student absenteeism. Public transportation (Table 2), primarily provided by SMART, is concentrated in southeastern areas, with limited connections between cities and counties. Other services, like People's Express (PEX), cover certain communities outside the SMART routes but are limited in range and only offer curb-to-curb, on-demand services.

Other options, such as OPC Social & Activity Center, North Oakland Transportation Authority (NOTA), and Western Oakland Transportation Authority (WOTA), focus on adults with disabilities and senior citizens, but allow for a companion rider of any age. Despite these alternatives, all services charge fees and face significant limitations, such as requiring internet access and pre-registration for curb-to-curb rides, with some charging cancellation fees. These gaps underscore the need for more comprehensive, accessible transportation solutions for all residents.

Table 2: Transportation Services in Oakland County

Service Name	Service Type	Fees Per Ride	Eligibility	Service Area
SMART SMART FAST SMART FLEX	Fixed and limited express routes Curb-to-curb, on-demand rides	\$2.00-\$8.00 (\$0.50-\$4.00 for youth 6-18 years)	All	South/East Oakland County, Connections to Wayne and Macomb Counties
PEX	Curb-to-curb, on-demand rides	\$2.00-\$4.02 (+ \$1.25 per mile outside service area)	All residents of service area	Milford, Lyon, Commerce, Wolverine Lake, and Wixom
OPC	Curb-to-curb, on-demand rides (registration required)	\$2.00	Adults with disabilities and seniors (+ companion rider)	Rochester Hills, Oakland Township and Rochester
NOTA & WOTA	Curb-to-curb, on-demand rides (registration required)	\$2.00-\$4.00	Adults with disabilities and seniors (+ companion rider)	North ⁱⁱⁱ /West ^{iv} Oakland County, limited communities

iii. NOTA serves Addison Twp., Oxford Twp., Orion Twp., Lake Orion, Leonard, Oxford Village, Ortonville, Brandon Twp., Clarkston, Independence Twp., and Springfield Twp.

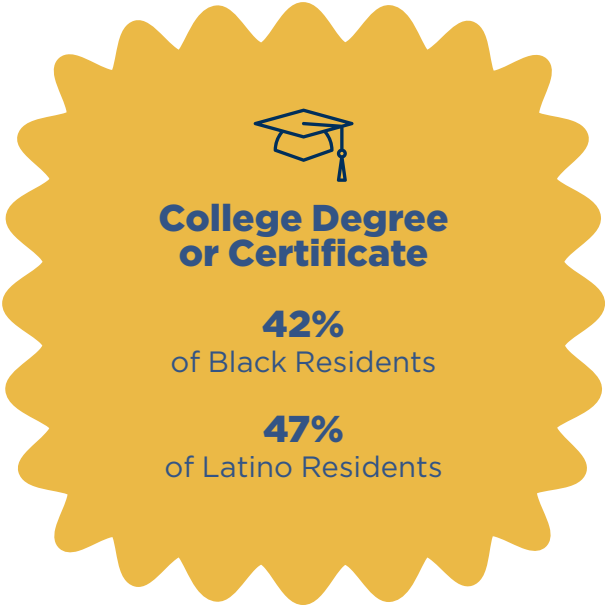
iv. WOTA serves Highland, Walled Lake, Waterford, White Lake, Lake Angelus, Keego Harbor, Sylvan Lake, Orchard Lake Village, Holly Village, Holly Twp., Rose Twp., and Groveland Twp.

Although Oakland County outperforms the state average in educational outcomes, educational and employment resources are largely concentrated in urban areas with the lowest graduation rates.

This raises concerns about whether current program distribution effectively meets youth needs or whether disparities stem from limited reach, supply, or local demand.

Access to education and employment opportunities is foundational to positive youth development. These resources not only equip young people with skills for future success but also reduce justice system involvement and support long-term personal growth. Oakland County offers a range of programs to promote academic achievement and prepare youth for the workforce. Education-focused initiatives such as [Oakland County Youth Educational Services](#), [Oakland County Truancy Department](#), and [College Bound](#) aim to remove barriers to learning. On the employment side, programs like [Oakland County Michigan Works!](#), [Oakland NEXT](#), and the [Oakland County Young Professionals Program](#) provide job readiness training and connect youth with career opportunities. The [iAmPontiac Work Experience Program](#) offers paid internships and summer jobs for Pontiac youth.

Several organizations also integrate education and employment support with mentorship and academic guidance. [The Pontiac Collective Impact Partnership](#) and [Boys 2 Men](#) help expand access to work experiences, while the [Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency](#) and [Centro Multicultural La Familia](#) provide tutoring services. Initiatives such as [My Sister’s Keeper](#) and [The Dream Kings Mission](#) further support youth in achieving educational and career goals. Despite the value of these programs, access remains inconsistent. Most are located in urban areas, making it difficult for youth in rural or remote areas to participate due to transportation barriers and inconsistent school attendance. Expanding the reach of education and employment resources into underserved areas would help close these gaps. By addressing geographic and access-related challenges, Oakland County can better support all youth in reaching their full potential.



Regional Disparities Post-Secondary Attainment by Region

Oakland80 Report, 2023

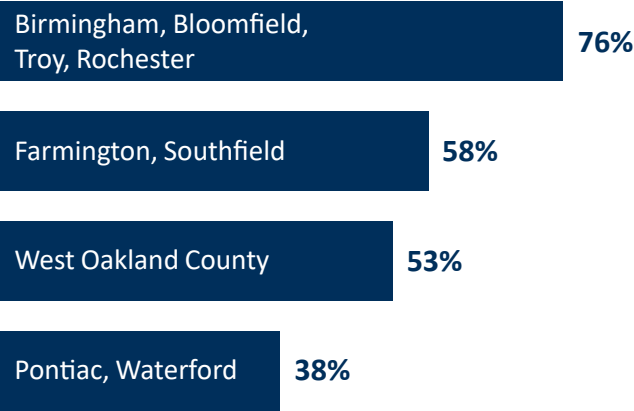
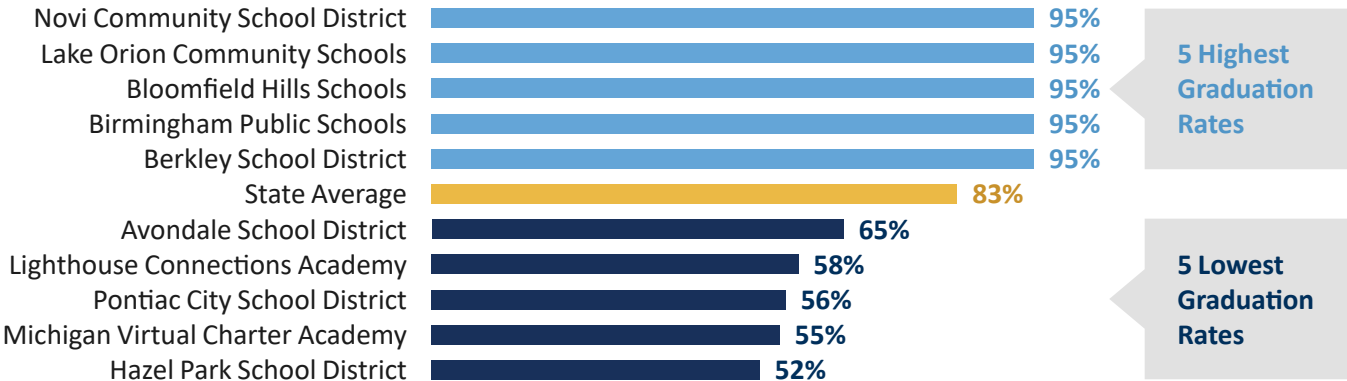


Figure 2: Graduation Rate by School District

Oakland County regularly outperforms the State in graduation rates, with over half of school districts exceeding the state average of 83%

Source: Michigan School Data, Report Builder (2023-2024)



While a wide range of behavioral health services exist, few are specifically designed to address the ever-changing and unique needs of young people, leaving critical gaps in support.

The increases in behavioral health needs among youth, especially in marginalized communities, highlight the unique challenges faced by both youth and families, as well as the community’s struggles to effectively address these needs.¹ This analysis identified 13 resources that address behavioral health, including mental health counseling, substance abuse treatment, and developmental disability services.

From 2011 to 2021, the percentage of high school students nationwide reporting persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness rose from

28% to 42%

Source: CDC’s Youth Risk Behavior Survey

The Oakland County Health Network (OCHN) is the most wide-reaching behavioral health resource. OCHN services the entire county, collaborating with a diverse array of providers to ensure comprehensive mental health care for young individuals. Among the other key organizations providing support are [Common Ground](#), [ADF Counseling](#), [Easterseals](#) and [Oakland Psychological Clinic](#), which offer crisis intervention, counseling, and support groups for people of all ages. Behavioral health services are available through [Henry Ford Behavioral Health](#), as well as through organizations like the [Arc of Oakland County](#) and [Community Network Services](#), which provide support and advocacy for mental health and developmental disabilities. Additionally, the [Oakland County Suicide Prevention Task Force](#) works to connect community partners focused on reducing suicide rates and fostering personal hope. [The Training & Treatment Innovations](#), [Alcoholics Anonymous](#), [Grace Centers of Hope](#), and the [Horizon Treatment Center](#) (though temporarily closed) offers outpatient programs, including trauma-related counseling and support for co-occurring disorders.

In addition to individual organizations, about 11 coalitions and collaborative groups across Oakland County work together to address various health issues which can contribute to promoting vital resources for parenting, guardians' and caregivers' support. While there may be valuable efforts underway, the lack of clear public information and promotional initiatives explaining the specific services these coalitions offer diminishes the community's awareness.

Oakland County offers a number of mentorship programs; however, their reach is limited due to inconsistent operation and a lack of inclusive, culturally responsive practices.

While several initiatives exist, many struggle with irregular availability or have ceased operations, particularly in rural areas. This gap reduces the mentorship programs overall impact, especially for marginalized youth who need tailored support.

Behavioral Health Centers & Clinics

New Oakland Family Centers: Clarkston, Farmington Hills, and West Bloomfield

Oakland Family Services: Pontiac, Royal Oak, and Walled Lake

Common Ground: Pontiac and Royal Oak

LifeStance Health: Bloomfield Hills, Clarkston, Novi, and Troy

Catholic Charities: Southfield, Auburn Hills, and Royal Oak

Jewish Family Service: Oak Park and West Bloomfield

Rochester Center for Behavioral Medicine: Rochester Hills

Drop-In Centers for Informal Support/Peer Interactions

Comfort Zone Unlimited in Novi

Friends Assisting In Recovery in Pontiac

Peer Choices in Waterford

North Oakland Drop-In in Holly

South Oakland Drop-In in Oak Park



Oakland County Collaboratives

Best Start for Babies

Drug Overdose Prevention and Response

Energizing Connections for Healthier Oakland (ECHO)

Health Equity Council

Healthy Oakland Partnership

Healthy Pontiac, We Can!

Homeless Healthcare Collaboration

Hospital Partnership

Long Term Care Partnership (LTC)

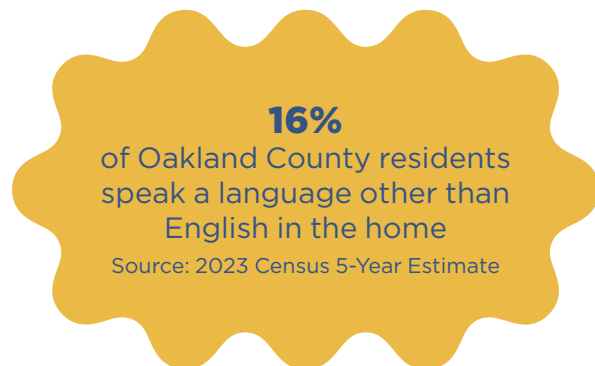
Suicide Prevention

County Wellness Wednesdays

General programs like [Boys & Girls Clubs of Oakland](#), [Believers Community Outreach Center](#), and the [Ascend Foundation](#) provide valuable guidance and connections. Gender-responsive initiatives such as [My Sister's Keeper](#), [Boys 2 Men](#), and [The Dream Kings Mission](#) offer tailored support empowering youth by identity. LGBTQIA+ individuals find safe spaces through [Stand with Trans](#) and [Affirmations](#), while culturally responsive mentorship is led by [Centro Multicultural La Familia](#). The [Power Company Kids Club](#) offers faith-based programs focused on academic success and personal growth. The Oakland County chapter of [The Links, Inc.](#) works to close the achievement gap from pre-K through college by promoting health, wellness, and STEAM education. Their programs include mentoring, cultural awareness, and community engagement. Additionally, the [Release and Refresh Women's Empowerment Series](#) in Farmington previously offered a six-month mentoring program focused on mental, emotional, and spiritual well-being. The program placed special emphasis on empowering single mothers in personal growth, parenting, education, and career development. However, it appears that the program is no longer in operation. [Mentors Plus](#), part of the Youth Assistance Program, connects at-risk youth with trained adult mentors to promote positive development and prevent delinquency. However, it's unclear whether the program is currently active countywide or only in select areas, as the website notes it has been paused due to COVID.

Despite these resources, expanded, consistent, and culturally inclusive mentorship and peer support are essential to meet the diverse needs of Oakland County's youth.

Oakland County has made efforts to make recreational activities more affordable, however youth and families, particularly those in low-income or remote areas, still face barriers to access.



Many young people express a desire for more free extracurricular options, but these opportunities remain unevenly distributed across the County. [Oakland County Parks and Recreation](#) provides access to numerous parks and facilities, including campgrounds and dog parks, and recently eliminated some entry fees at parks and dog parks. For those who do have an entry fee, costs range between \$12 and \$20 per person, and all parks charge for certain activities (e.g., golf, camping, access to sports facilities) regardless of their entry fee. To enhance access to recreational experiences in underserved communities, the County's [Recreation Assistance Partnership Program \(RAPP\)](#) collaborates with municipalities, administering grants for mobile recreation units and nature education programming for youth.

Other affordable opportunities include the [Oakland County 4-H](#), which offers free programs in areas such as science, technology, and agriculture, empowering youth with skills for future success, and the [Sheriff PAL Program](#) provides free sports and enrichment activities to youth. [The Boys & Girls Clubs of Oakland](#) serve youth ages 6 to 17 through after-school and summer programs, with scholarships available to help cover membership costs. Meanwhile, [Michigan Youth Sports](#) promotes youth participation in sports without charging membership fees, instead relying on grants and donations to support their programming.

Expanding Community Support for Justice-Involved Youth

Justice-involved youth in Oakland County face significant barriers to accessing community-based services. Stigma and restrictive eligibility criteria often limit their participation in programs, especially when charges, probation conditions, or system-related bias exclude them from enrollment. Strict program eligibility requirements or exclusions create barriers for youth who need support, leaving them feeling stigmatized and discouraged. Many staff report referring youth to programs without realizing that their circumstances disqualify them. Prior or current justice involvement, difficulty obtaining documentation such as a birth certificate or social security card, and insurance limitations often prevent individuals from accessing the care and resources they need. Many services are not designed with these youths' unique needs in mind, lacking trauma-informed or culturally responsive approaches that build trust.

Youth Assistance (YA) Program is the sole community-based program designed to strengthen youth and families while reducing delinquency, abuse, and neglect through local involvement. Operating under a unique tri-sponsorship model involving the Circuit Court, local school districts, and municipalities, each of the 26 YA offices is locally governed by a volunteer board. While the local boards' ability to tailor services based on the specific needs of their communities is a key strength, it also leads to disparities in access and opportunities for youth across the county, as not all Youth Assistance programs operate in the same way.

Youth Assistance is one of the few programs with a broad presence across Oakland County, serving all 62 communities

Local Offices

Avondale, Berkley, Birmingham, Bloomfield Hills, Brandon, Clarkston, Clawson, Farmington, Ferndale, Hazel Park, Holly, Huron Valley, Madison Heights, Novi, Orion, Oak Park, Oxford, Pontiac, Rochester, Royal Oak, South Lyon, Southfield, Troy, Walled Lake, Waterford, West Bloomfield

Juvenile Casework Services plays a critical role in supporting justice-involved youth by providing probation case management and connecting them to essential services such as counseling, education, and substance use treatment. However, staff frequently encounter significant barriers, including restrictive eligibility requirements, long waitlists, and a shortage of appropriate community-based programs, particularly for youth with complex needs. These limitations often hinder the ability of probation officers to deliver timely and effective interventions. At the same time, Children's Village, the County's residential facility, offers a wide range of high-quality on-site services, including education, vocational training, behavioral health support, and family-focused programming. Stakeholders consistently praise the facility as a model for comprehensive, youth-centered care. Yet, when youth return to their communities, they often face a sharp disconnect due to the absence of similarly robust services. This lack of continuity places their progress at risk and highlights the urgent need to replicate and extend these supports within the community.

Together, these systemic challenges highlight the need for inclusive, coordinated, and youth-centered services that are accessible across the County. Bridging these gaps is essential to ensuring consistent support, successful reintegration, and long-term positive outcomes for justice-involved youth.

Oakland County's Shared Vision

During the analysis, it was revealed that there is a shared recognition of the critical need for a comprehensive resource inventory designed to address the unique needs of youth in Oakland County. Despite the varying roles and perspectives of stakeholders, this collective acknowledgment underscores a commitment to enhancing opportunities for youth, their families, and the broader community. The following section outlines the County's goals for coordinating resources, reflecting a unified vision to improve resource availability and accessibility.

Resource Access and Management

Oakland County aims to create a centralized resource hub that is comprehensive, reliable, and user-friendly, ensuring the community is well-informed about available resources. Stakeholders would like a platform that will empower users to identify needed services, understand eligibility criteria, and navigate access points seamlessly. The inventory should be adaptable to diverse populations by providing materials in various formats, offering language translation services, accommodating disabilities, and including an intuitive search feature that prioritizes privacy and safety. Additionally, the County is committed to maintaining high-quality, accurate, and sustainably updated information, fostering a transparent and effective network that remains relevant over time.

Empowerment, Engagement, and Support

To promote community empowerment, Oakland County wants to establish initiatives that equip youth and families with the knowledge, confidence, and skills necessary to access vital resources, minimizing barriers and fostering self-sufficiency. Stakeholders strive to create an inventory that will support youth development across the continuum of care—from prevention and early intervention to short- and long-term treatment—by increasing opportunities for meaningful community engagement. Moreover, the County is interested in actively involving youth, families, and community stakeholders in providing ongoing feedback, ensuring the Inventory remains responsive to the evolving needs of the community.

Collaboration and Coordination

Oakland County seeks to enhance collaboration among youth-serving organizations by improving the coordination of resources and services. This initiative would aim to ensure that organizations work together effectively, delivering quality services without redundant efforts. By streamlining support for youth and their families, the County is dedicated to fostering a collaborative environment that maximizes the impact of resources and services available.

SECTION III:

Looking Forward

Building a Collaborative and Strengths-Based Support Network

Before identifying specific actions, it is essential to ground Oakland County's efforts in a clear understanding of what an effective, youth-centered support system should look like. Building a collaborative and strengths-based support network provides this foundation, outlining the core values, evidence-based practices, and systemic approaches that should guide the County's youth justice reform and the development of its resource inventory. Centered on collaboration, equity, and holistic support, the framework highlights what youth and families need to thrive. Research indicates that well-coordinated efforts create a more cohesive support system, helping to limit unnecessary system involvement and significantly reduce recidivism.² This framework is designed to inform not just how services are listed, but how they are coordinated, strengthened, and expanded. The considerations that follow build on this foundation, translating its principles into concrete strategies to create a more integrated, accessible, and responsive network for Oakland County's youth.

Support Network Framework

Community programs that utilize a [positive youth development](#) approach are designed to build on the talents, interests, and strengths of youth while promoting healthy relationships with caring adults and providing opportunities for skill development.³

[Trauma-informed care](#) is a critical element for creating a non-punitive environment where there is understanding of the potential paths for recovery. Research shows that trauma-informed care not only promotes healing but also fosters stability within the community, effectively reducing the need for more restrictive system responses and enhancing the youth's overall wellbeing.⁴

The importance of [mentorship and positive relationships](#) cannot be overstated. Supportive connections with caring adults, established through collaborative programs, can greatly shape a young person's life. Research demonstrates that mentorship can reduce antisocial

behaviors and help youth navigate challenges by offering stability, encouragement, and guidance.⁵

Supporting the [holistic needs of families](#) is equally important. Providing resources that foster strong family bonds, address underlying issues, and equip families with the tools necessary for success can significantly enhance resilience among youth. Studies show that family engagement is important, laying the groundwork for ongoing support and stability, which in turn supports positive youth development.⁶

Incorporating [education and employment opportunities](#) is paramount. Stable employment is strongly linked to reduced criminal behavior, yet many youth encounter barriers to quality education and training.⁷ Programs should strive to offer high-quality learning and vocational paths, equipping young people with job readiness skills. Collaborative efforts can break down access barriers and connect youth to necessary resources.

Lastly, the inclusion of [restorative justice practices](#) presents an opportunity to repair harm and address victims' needs while promoting the wellbeing of young people. Restorative justice emphasizes accountability, healing, and community involvement, offering pathways for youth to learn from their mistakes and contribute positively to their communities.

Considerations for Advancement

Creating a resource inventory is more than compiling a list of programs—it is about building a dynamic tool that supports meaningful, system-wide change. When designed intentionally, the inventory can serve as a foundation for stronger partnerships, improved coordination, and more equitable access to youth services. It should be used to identify gaps, uplift under-resourced organizations, and guide targeted resource expansion where support is most needed. This requires ongoing exploration, active collaboration across sectors, and a commitment to community voices. The following section offers strategic considerations to support the Implementation Team as it develops the inventory and advances youth justice reform efforts in Oakland County.

Consideration #1: Use Gap Analysis to Build a Centralized, Inclusive Resource Inventory

Oakland County should use the gap analysis findings to guide the development of a centralized, county-wide resource inventory that addresses service fragmentation, rural access issues, and youth-specific needs like mental health, education and employment, mentoring, and basic needs. Stakeholders should work together to identify hard-to-reach resources such as informal, community-based, or temporary programs by partnering with local leaders and organizations, especially in underserved areas. Creating a digital resource hub with real-time information on services, eligibility, and locations, including pop-up and short-term efforts, will improve coordination, visibility, and access for at-risk and justice-involved youth.

In preparation for launching the resource inventory, the County should also develop an engagement plan that includes youth- and family-led forums, town halls, and focus groups. Ongoing input from diverse communities will help shape solutions.

Consideration #2: Establish a Cross-Sector Task Force to Strengthen Coordination and Regional Collaboration

Oakland County should establish a cross-sector task force with representatives from local government, schools, health services, and youth-serving organizations to lead a unified, data-driven approach to youth support. This

group will align goals, streamline resource coordination, and develop shared protocols to close service gaps and reduce duplication. To improve collaboration, the task force should implement shared referral and case management systems that allow providers to track service usage and ensure no youth is overlooked. Regular communication, joint planning, and data sharing will be key functions of this coalition. Regional collaboration with neighboring counties like Wayne should also be prioritized to align services, maximize resources, and reduce fragmentation. A coordinated, countywide and cross-county approach will help deliver more consistent, equitable support for youth and families in Oakland County. Additionally, forming an advisory group of youth, families, and community leaders will help guide program design and outreach.

Consideration #3: Expand Access by Partnering with Community Institutions and Supporting Grassroots Efforts

Oakland County, through its cross-sector coalition, should strengthen partnerships with trusted community institutions such as libraries, schools, faith-based organizations, and community centers to expand youth service access, outreach, and program delivery. To reduce barriers and promote equity, the County should support grassroots organizations by providing mini-grants, technical assistance, and capacity-building resources. These groups often have deep community ties but limited funding. Prioritizing programs that address urgent needs like transportation, childcare, and housing will further enhance equitable access and strengthen the youth service network. Offering grant writing workshops and leveraging existing local infrastructure can empower community-led initiatives to launch and sustain their efforts effectively.

Consideration #4: Develop Youth-Specific Services with Focus on Housing, Mental Health, and Geographic Equity

Oakland County should prioritize expanding youth-tailored services, especially for unaccompanied youth ages 16–24 who often fall between the child and adult systems. This includes increasing access to shelters, crisis support, and youth-centered mental health and

case management. To ensure equity, services must be extended beyond urban hubs, like Pontiac, to reach youth in suburban and rural areas who currently face limited access due to geographic disparities.

Consideration #5: Leverage the Education System to Expand Youth Access and Support

Oakland County should strengthen partnerships with schools and other educational entities to increase awareness and access to youth services. Embedding social workers, counselors, and resource navigators in schools can provide early, consistent support, while youth and peer navigators can help young people connect with resources more effectively. To support long-term success, the County should also integrate academic support with job training and mentorship, prioritizing high-need areas with low graduation and employment readiness rates. Youth input should guide program design to ensure services are relevant, accessible, and impactful.

Consideration #6: Remove Access Barriers to Youth Behavioral Health Services

Oakland County should streamline intake processes and expand provider capacity to reduce waitlists and ease eligibility barriers. To improve access, the County should also invest in transportation solutions and expand telehealth options, especially for youth in rural or underserved areas. Clear, coordinated outreach is essential to ensure families understand available services and how to navigate the system.

Consideration #7: Strengthen and Expand Youth Mentorship Through a Countywide Collaborative

Oakland County should establish a Countywide Mentorship Collaborative to coordinate efforts across schools, nonprofits, community groups, and youth leaders - prioritizing underserved areas. This network will align services, share best practices, and increase reach. To ensure sustainability, the County should provide multi-year funding and technical assistance to mentorship programs, with a focus on grassroots organizations and marginalized communities. Additionally, a county-led mentor recruitment and training initiative should be launched to build a diverse, trauma-informed, and culturally responsive pool of mentors who reflect the youth they serve.

Consideration #8: Expand Free Youth Programming in Underserved Areas

Oakland County should invest in mobile recreation units and pop-up sports and arts programs in high-need neighborhoods, especially those identified as play deserts. Partnering with schools, libraries, and community centers will ensure free activities are accessible where youth already gather, increasing participation and positive engagement.

Consideration #9: Incentivize Programs Addressing Critical Access Barriers to Enhance Youth Participation

Develop and implement an incentive program for community organizations and service providers that address high-priority barriers to youth access. Incentives could include additional funding, priority access to grants, or technical assistance to help these programs expand capacity and improve service delivery. By rewarding efforts that directly reduce participation obstacles, Oakland County can ensure more equitable access to essential services, increase engagement among underserved populations, and strengthen the overall effectiveness of the youth support network.

Consideration #10: Develop a Standardized Resource Collection Template to Streamline Inventory Building

Oakland County should design and implement a standardized template to collect detailed information from youth-serving organizations for inclusion in the resource inventory. This template should capture key data points such as service types, eligibility criteria, geographic coverage, contact information, capacity limits, language accessibility, and any barriers to access. It should also include sections for program strengths, evidence-based practices used, and collaboration opportunities. The template must be user-friendly and adaptable to accommodate diverse organizations, from large agencies to grassroots groups. Providing clear guidance and training on how to complete the template will ensure consistency and accuracy. Utilizing this standardized tool will streamline data collection, improve the quality and usability of the inventory, and support ongoing updates and resource coordination across the County.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the gap analysis revealed critical resource shortfalls that demand immediate, strategic action to better serve Oakland County's youth. While existing programs meet many needs, significant gaps remain and addressing these is essential to building a truly equitable and effective support system. The County's commitment to creating a centralized resource hub signals a bold step toward improving access, empowering youth and families with vital information, and connecting them to the services they need to thrive.

The strategies outlined focus on enhancing resource access, strengthening community engagement, and fostering cross-sector collaboration to demonstrate a clear and unified path toward transformative change. Oakland County is taking decisive action to break down silos, amplify voices, and maintain up-to-date resource data, laying the foundation for a responsive, sustainable network that prioritizes the holistic wellbeing of youth and families.

By embracing this collaborative, strengths-based approach with urgency and intention, Oakland County is investing in its future. This is more than a plan; it is a call to action that will strengthen communities, reduce system involvement, and create lasting opportunities for success. Together, through sustained partnership and shared responsibility, Oakland County will overcome existing challenges and build a brighter, more equitable future for generations to come.



Appendix A: Oakland County Juvenile Justice Reform Implementation Team



Juvenile Justice Reform – Oakland County Implementation Team

6th Judicial Circuit Court

Lisa Langton	<i>Presiding Judge, Family Division</i>
Pam Monville	<i>Deputy Court Administrator</i>
Liz Csizmadia	<i>Chief, Youth Assistance</i>
Melissa Reid	<i>Chief, Casework Services</i>
Chris Bujak	<i>Manager, Court Business Operations</i>
Remele Penick	<i>Court Resource and Program Specialist</i>
Brianna Lewis	<i>Court Technical Services Supervisor</i>
Bethany Brooks	<i>Court Program Evaluation Analyst</i>
Scott Hamilton	<i>Manager, Judicial Support/Judicial Assistant</i>
Lisa Harris	<i>Juvenile Court Referee Supervisor</i>
Erin O'Brien	<i>Chief, Juvenile and Adoption Services</i>
Melissa Sulfaro, PhD	<i>Chief, Clinical Services</i>

Oakland County Board of Commissioners

Michael Andrews	<i>Chief of Staff, Board of Commissioners</i>
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Oakland County Executive

Madiha Tariq	<i>Deputy County Executive</i>
Barbara Hankey	<i>Director of Public Services</i>
Heather Calcaterra	<i>Manager, Children's Village</i>
Amanda Ranucci	<i>Administrator, Children's Village</i>
Samino Scott, PhD	<i>Chief of Project Management and Initiatives, Children's Village</i>

Oakland County Prosecutor

Kelly Collins	<i>Chief, Juvenile Justice Division</i>
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Oakland County Health Network

Siiri Sikora	<i>Director of Justice Initiatives</i>
Heather Willis	<i>Behavioral Health and Justice Liaison Supervisor</i>

Michigan Department of Health and Human Services

Tom Scheuer	<i>Director, Oakland County Children's Services</i>
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Oakland County Chiefs of Police Association

Brian Moore	<i>Captain, Farmington Hills Police Department</i>
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Juvenile Defense Attorney Representative

Fred Mainka	<i>Frederick P. Mainka, Esq., PLC</i>
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Oakland County K-12 School Districts

Edmund Hillery	<i>Attendance Officer, Oakland Schools Intermediate District</i>
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Community-based Service Agencies Representative

VACANT	<i>Pontiac Collective Impact</i>
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Oakland University

Wendi L. Johnson, PhD	<i>Associate Professor of Criminal Justice</i>
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Serving Children and Families – Together

Appendix B: Gap Analysis Community Resources

Organization	Category	Location	Website
ADF Counseling	Behavioral and Mental Health	Commerce Township	no direct website
Affirmations	Special Populations	Ferndale	goaffirmations.org
Alcoholics Anonymous of Southeast	Behavioral and Mental Health	Countywide-Multiple Locations	aa-semi.org
Arab American and Chaldean Council (ACC)	Special Populations	Troy	myacc.org
Ascend Foundation	Mentorship, Education/Employment	Bloomfield	theascendfoundation.org
Association for Children's Mental Health (ACMH)	Behavioral and Mental Health	Countywide-Multiple Locations	acmh-mi.org
Baldwin Center	Basic Needs	Pontiac	baldwincenter.org
Believers Community Outreach Center	Education/Employment	Pontiac	believerscoc.org
Best Start for Babies Oakland County (BSBOC)	Special Populations, Mentorship	Countywide-Multiple Locations	oakgov.com/community
Boys & Girls Club of Southeastern Michigan	Education/Employment	Farmington Hills	bgcsm.org
Boys 2 Men	Special Populations, Mentorship	Lathrup Village	boys2menyouthmentoring.com
CARE House of Oakland County	Mental and Behavioral Health	Pontiac	carehouse.org
Centro Multicultural La Familia, Inc.	Special Populations	Pontiac	centromulticultural.org
College Bound	Education/Employment	Rochester	micollegeaccess.org/initiatives
Common Ground Resource & Crisis Center	Mental Health	Pontiac	commongroundhelps.org

Organization	Category	Location	Website
Community Network Services	Mental and Behavioral Health	Countywide-Multiple Locations	cnshealthcare.org
Department of Health & Human Services	Health, Mental and Behavioral Health	Countywide-Multiple Locations	michigan.gov/mdhhs
Easterseals MORC – (Macomb Oakland Regional Center)	Mental and Behavioral Health	Pontiac	easterseals.com/MORC
God’s Helping Hands	Basic Needs	Rochester Hills	ghhmichigan.org
Grace Centers of Hope	Basic Needs	Pontiac	gracecentersofhope.org
HAVEN Oakland	Health	Pontiac	haven-oakland.org
Havenwyck Hospital	Health	Auburn Hills	havenwyckhospital.com
Henry Ford Behavioral Health	Mental and Behavioral Health	Troy	henryford.com/services
Horizon Treatment Center (temporarily closed)	Mental and Behavioral Health	Southfield	horizontreatment.org
iAmPontiac Work Experience Program	Mentorship, Education/ Employment	Pontiac	pontiaccollectiveimpact.org/projects
Jack and Jill, Mid-Western Region	Mentorship, Education/ Employment	Pontiac	jjmwr.org
Jewish Family Services	Special Populations	West Bloomfield	jfsdetroit.org
Justice for Our Neighbors	Legal	Beverly Hills	immigrationadvocates.org/legaldirectory
Ladies of Charity	Basic Needs	Bloomfield Hills	theladiesofcharity.org
Lighthouse of Oakland County	Basic Needs	Pontiac	lighthousemi.org
Michigan Youth Sports	Education/Employment	Countywide-Multiple Locations	nationalacademyofathletics.com

Organization	Category	Location	Website
My Sister's Keeper	Mentorship, Education/ Employment	Highland	mysisterskeeperhp.org
Neighbor for Neighbor, Inc.	Basic Needs	Waterford	neighborforneighbor.net
New Day Foundation	Mental and Behavioral Health	Rochester Hills	foundationforfamilies.org
North Oakland Transportation Authority (NOTA)	Transportation	Countywide-Multiple Locations	ridenota.org
Oakland Community Health Network (OCHN)	Mental and Behavioral Health	Troy	oaklandchn.org
Oakland County 4-H	Mentorship, Education/ Employment	Pontiac	canr.msu.edu/oakland/4-h
Oakland County Circuit Court, Language and Sign Language Interpreter Lists	Legal	Pontiac	oakgov.com/interpreterlist
Oakland County Drug Overdose Prevention and Response	Mental and Behavioral Health	Countywide-Multiple Locations	oakgov.com/community/health/partnerships
Oakland County Energizing Connections for Healthier Oakland (ECHO)	Mental and Behavioral Health	Countywide-Multiple Locations	oakgov.com/community/health/partnerships/echo
Oakland County Foster Closet	Basic Needs	Farmington Hills	ocfostercloset.org
Oakland County Health Equity Council	Health	Countywide-Multiple Locations	oakgov.com/community/health/partnerships/health-equity-council
Oakland County Healthy Oakland Partnership (HOP)	Health	Countywide-Multiple Locations	oakgov.com/community/health/partnerships/healthy-oakland-partnership-hop

Organization	Category	Location	Website
Oakland County Healthy Pontiac, We Can!	Health	Countywide-Multiple Locations	oakgov.com/community/health/partnerships/healthy-pontiac-we-can
Oakland County Homeless Healthcare Collaboration	Basic Needs	Countywide-Multiple Locations	oakgov.com/community/health/partnerships/homeless-healthcare-collaboration
Oakland County Hospital Partnership	Health	Countywide-Multiple Locations	oakgov.com/community/health/partnerships/hospital-partnership
Oakland County Housing Resource Center	Basic Needs	Pontiac	communityhousingnetwork.org
Oakland County Long Term Care Partnership (LTC)	Mental and Behavioral Health	Countywide-Multiple Locations	oakgov.com/community/health/partnerships/long-term-care-partnership
Oakland County Michigan Works!	Education/Employment	Countywide-Multiple Locations	waterfordmiworks.org/youth
Oakland County Parks & Recreation Facilities	Education/Employment	Countywide-Multiple Locations	oakgov.com/community
Oakland County Suicide Prevention Tasks Force	Mental and Behavioral Health	Countywide-Multiple Locations	oakgov.com/community/health/partnerships/suicide-prevention
Oakland County Truancy Department	Education/Employment	Countywide-Multiple Locations	oakland.k12.mi.us/truancy
Oakland County Wellness Wednesdays	Mental and Behavioral Health	Countywide-Multiple Locations	oakgov.com/community/health/partnerships/wellness-wednesdays
Oakland County Young Professionals Program	Education/Employment	Pontiac	oakgov.com/business
Oakland County Youth Educational Services	Education/Employment	Novi	ocytesnow.org
Oakland Family Services	Education/Employment	Pontiac, Royal Oak, and Walled Lake	oaklandfamilyservices.org

Organization	Category	Location	Website
Oakland HOPE	Basic Needs	Pontiac	oaklandhope.org
Oakland Livingston Human Service Agency (OLHSA)	Education/Employment	Pontiac	olhsa.org/en-us
Oakland NEXT	Education/Employment Mentorship	Countywide-Multiple Locations	oakgov.com/workforce-development/youth
Oakland Psychological Clinic	Mental and Behavioral Health	Bloomfield Hills	oakpsych.com
OPC Social & Activity Center	Transportation	Countywide-Multiple Locations	opctransportation.org
Open Door Outreach Center	Basic Needs	Waterford	opendooroutreachcenter.org
Oxford Community Schools	Education/Employment	Oxford	oxfordschools.org
People's Express (PEX)	Transportation	Countywide-Multiple Locations	peoplesexpress.org
Pontiac Collective Impact Partnership	Education/Employment	Pontiac	pontiaccollectiveimpact.org
Pontiac Community Foundation (PCF)	Philanthropy, Basic Needs	Pontiac	pontiaccommunityfoundation.org
Recreation Assistance Partnership Program	Education/Employment	Countywide-Multiple Locations	oakgov.com/community/oakland-county-parks/get-involved/community-outreach-grant-programs/rapp
Release & Refresh Women's Empowerment Series, Inc.	Mentorship	Farmington	release-refreshwes.org (temporarily unavailable)
Sheriff PAL Program	Education/Employment Mentorship	Pontiac	sheriffpal.com
SMART	Transportation	Countywide-Multiple Locations	oakgov.com/oakland-transit/transit-services

Organization	Category	Location	Website
Stand with Trans	Special Populations	Farmington	standwithtrans.org
The ARC Oakland	Mental and Behavioral Health	Troy	thearcoakland.org
The Common Ground (Oakland County Mental Health Crisis Line)	Mental and Behavioral Health	Bingham Farms	commongroundhelps.org
The Dream Kings Mission	Mentorship	Southfield	thedreamkings.org
The Links, Inc.	Mentorship, Education/ Employment	Pontiac	oaklandcountylinks.org
The Power Company Kids Club	Mentorship, Education/ Employment	Pontiac	thepckc.org
Training & Treatment Innovations, Inc.	Mental and Behavioral Health	Troy	ttiinc.org
Western Oakland Transportation Authority (WOTA)	Transportation	Countywide-Multiple Locations	ridewota.org
Youth Assistance Program	Diversion	Countywide-Multiple Locations	oakgov.com/government/courts/youth-assistance

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