PYC Before 2020

Over the past two years, amidst the hurdles of the pandemic, Chesapeake Bay Outward Bound School’s (CBOBS) Police Youth Challenge (PYC) Program found an opportunity to redefine itself so that it may best serve the Officers and Students that participate. Running in its current iteration since 2016, PYC had served a total of 7,747 participants. Of those 7,747, 3,286 were BPD (Baltimore Police Department) officers while 4,461 were youth from the communities of Baltimore. Sitting as part of BPD’s In-service training, CBOBS ran three to four PYC programs a month providing officers the opportunity to engage with youth the community they serve. With the program halted due to COVID-19, CBOBS and BPD explored other ways that their partnership could evolve and better serve both the officers and students.

CBOBS’ PYC Coordinator

Improving police community relations, specifically between youth and BPD, is the main goal of PYC and within his role Khai Overton, CBOBS’ PYC Program Coordinator, has pushed CBOBS into new spaces in this aspect. In October 2019, Khai delivered a TEDx talk on the program as part of the college TEDx series held at Thomas Jefferson University. Also, in December 2020, Khai was named to the inaugural Public Safety Citizens Advisory Commission by Mayor Brandon Scott due to his work in the realms of police reform in Baltimore. PYC is successful because of partnerships. In addition to the Baltimore City Police Department, Khai’s work on the commission bridges our work with the community. Having the Mayor’s Office as part of the PYC network provides a holistic approach to fostering trust between youth, community leaders and the BPD.
YOUTH WHO FEEL THEY HAVE INCREASED CONFLICT RESOLUTION SKILLS AFTER THE PYC.
Building on the foundation of PYC

Khai found a new opportunity to impact officer’s learning when BPD’s Education and Training Department began overhauling the format for how they develop their annual trainings. With the help of BPD’s Compliance Bureau, the Department began the process of sourcing community collaborators who wanted to work together in developing of BPD’s first ever annual Community Policing Training. These collaborators were broken into three groups:

- Content Development,
- Implementation,
- and Training Evaluation.

CBOBS’ Khai Overton was specifically invited to chair the Implementation Team. This team identified community facilitators who were experts on the diverse topics covered in the BPD’s training modules such as: the history of Baltimore, community interaction, and policing lesser offenses. BPD’s training debuted in May 2021 and all sworn officers had completed the training by October, with year two of Community Policing Training beginning in 2022.

Along with chairing BPD’s Implementation Team, Khai was sworn in as a member of the inaugural Public Safety Advisory Commission after confirmation by the Baltimore City Council in December of 2020. Every November the 23-member Public Safety

OFFICER CHANGES IN PERCEPTION OF YOUTH

BPD Recruits participate in PYC while attending BPD’s Education and Training Academy. During their 34 weeks in the academy, recruits are afforded the chance to attend PYC in their opening onboarding week, closer to their mid-term examination, or as they approach matriculation from the academy. This attendance pattern was specifically designed to give recruits an opportunity to interact with youth from the community they will be serving WHILE they are in a foundational learning phase. Recruits are offered an opportunity to rank their various perceptions of Baltimore youth on a 7-point Likert scale survey both before and after PYC. (n=109)

- Social Distance
- Stereotypical Beliefs
- Trust
- Relationship Importance
- Relationship Skills
- Relationship Climate
- Biased Beliefs

BEFORE PYC | AFTER PYC
Safety Advisory Commission develops recommendations for community interaction for the Baltimore City Police Department, with a goal of creating consistently positive and respectful actions between Baltimore residents and the BPD. This report helps to influence the Baltimore Police Department’s strategy, practices, and polices surrounding community engagement.

The PYC Reinvented

Throughout 2020 CBOBS and BPD continued conversations about what was the next step for PYC; especially since both organizations were at a crossroads, with CBOBS suspending programming and the BPD overhauling their In-Service Training (meaning training for active officers). The In-Service training had been the home of PYC since 2016 and currently did not have any space within its schedule for the program due to the newly added Consent Decree mandated trainings. In February of 2021, BPD and CBOBS found the solution to move PYC from working with sworn officers as part of its In-Service Training, to having the program work solely with its new recruits going through the police academy. Shifting the program in this manner has a variety of benefits:

- In 2022 PYC was written into BPD’s Master Training Plan as a community organization partnership with CBOBS.

- BPD’s Academy training length is currently 34 weeks (about 8 months). All recruits going through BPD’s academy will go through PYC at least twice, initially when they begin the academy, and either in the middle of their time in the academy or right before they graduate. This means that for many new officers, PYC will be the first time they will interact with youth from the community of Baltimore before they become members of BPD.

- All recruits attending BPD’s academy moving forward will have attended a PYC during their time at the academy. This means that all recruits will have engaged with members of the community in community building perspective BEFORE they are sworn in as police officers or begin their instructional learning at the academy.
In the summer of 2021, CBOBS ran four PYC Programs with BPD recruit academy classes over the summer. In total through those four programs CBOBS saw over 152 participants (91 recruits / 61 youth) to help kickstart this new chapter of the Police Youth Challenge Program.

Our refreshed partnership with BPD and their new recruits offers impactful opportunities that were previously unavailable to the program. When these recruits begin their community building on day-one, rather than years into service, they are building bridges of trust, respect, and perspective with the youth that they will be serving. These are the goals of CBOBS and BPD, and this is the new foundation of the Police Youth Challenge Program.

Our youth attending PYC all hail from various communities in Baltimore. They come out to PYC as a part of various public and charter schools, and summer youth programs. As a vital part of PYC’s community building model, youth are empowered to engage in the day with BPD recruits with equal standing and voice. At the beginning and conclusion of PYC, youth are offered an opportunity to rank their feelings and perceptions of BPD officers on a 7-point Likert scale. (n=109)
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