



DATA-SHARING POLICIES AND PRACTICES IN BALTIMORE CITY, MD

Report prepared for:

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Executive Summary

From July 2021 to July 2022, a University of Maryland School of Social Work (UMSSW) team explored how Baltimore City child- and youth-serving agencies and organizations share child- and youth-focused data. This work involved identifying and meeting with representatives from municipal agencies that collect and maintain data (i.e., data holders) related to children and youth, as well as collecting information on how youth-serving community organizations (i.e., data users) need to use such data. This information was then synthesized to identify strengths and challenges of current data-sharing practices and develop recommendations for enhancing data-sharing practices in Baltimore City with the overall goal of supporting data-driven child and youth service delivery.

The research team identified 7 data-holding agencies, including 2 data repositories that link multiple data sources, and 23 youth-serving violence prevention organizations that are data users. Based on online research as well as meetings and emails with representatives from data-holding agencies, this report describes each of these 7 agencies, their programs, and their processes for collecting, using, and sharing data pertaining to children and youth in Baltimore City. Additionally, the research team conducted a brief survey on data use and needs of youth-serving violence prevention organizations. The survey was distributed to 21 organizations, and 8 responded. Closed-ended survey questions found a consistent need for data across data types (e.g., health, education, crime data), with organizations reporting that they mostly commonly use data to meet funding requirements. Respondents primarily obtain data through relationships with individuals. Survey responses showed that key challenges to obtaining data include not knowing where to get data and agencies declining to share data.

This effort identified 3 key strengths of data sharing in Baltimore City. First, existing data holders possess large amounts of information that is relevant to Baltimore City children and youth well-being. Second, existing data can be used to inform and improve youth program outcomes. Third, when data sharing takes place, this practice can lead to positive outcomes for youth. In addition, this project identified 5 categories of data-sharing challenges. These challenges include data sensitivity, infrastructure and capacity deficits, lack of collaboration among data holders and users, data literacy limitations, and lack of data integration. This report details these strengths and challenges and potential implications for youth-serving organizations in Baltimore City.

Using the various sources of information drawn upon for understanding data-sharing practices and policies, this report offers recommendations for enhancing data sharing in Baltimore City. Applying a community-based data equity lens, these recommendations highlight the importance of researching and building upon data-sharing best practices, increasing agencies' and organizations' capacity for data sharing and data-driven service delivery, and both advocating for and implementing clear data-sharing policies. Enhancements made to data-sharing practices and policies are likely to support data-driven child and youth service delivery, leading to the improvement of agencies' and organizations' ability to effectively meet the needs of children and youth in Baltimore City.

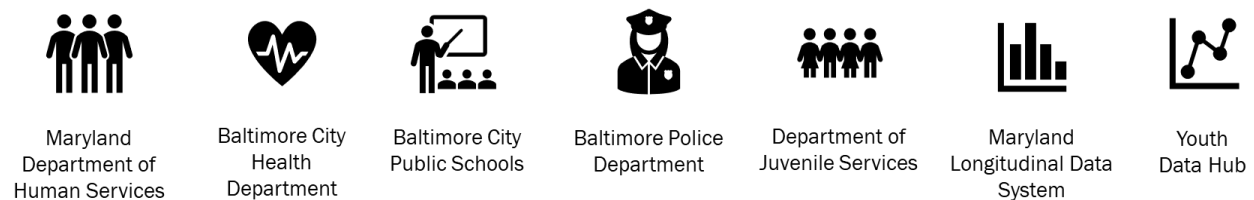
Project Overview

The University of Maryland School of Social Work (UMSSW) partnered with the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) and Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) Office of Youth and Trauma Services to complete a thorough review of data-sharing policies and practices among child- and youth-serving municipal agencies and grassroots community organizations in Baltimore City, Maryland (MD). This information was synthesized to identify strengths and challenges of current data sharing and develop recommendations for enhancing data-sharing policies and practices with the overall goal of supporting data-driven child and youth service delivery, particularly for young people impacted by trauma and violence. Detailed in this report are the methods and findings of this investigation, including summary descriptions of youth-serving data holders, youth-serving data users, current strengths and challenges of data sharing in Baltimore City, and recommendations for further enhancing current data-sharing practices in the City.

Methods

This section provides an overview of the processes undertaken to examine Baltimore City data-sharing practices. Included are methods of gathering information summarized in this report, descriptions of agencies and organizations involved in this investigation, analytic methods, and key definitions for understanding the report content.

Meetings with Data Holders



In the context of this effort, *data holders* are municipal agencies that collect, manage, analyze, or otherwise use large quantities of data that others in Baltimore City might want to access. Our team sought to identify primary data holders in the City and did so based on team members' collective professional experience and an online search. Our team learned of one data holder from a professional newsletter. Although our team worked to thoroughly identify data holders, the list of data holders participating in this project is not an exhaustive list of all data holders in the City.

We initially contacted and met with 8 agencies to discuss data-sharing practices; however 7 were included as data holders. One was not included in this report because the agency's staff stated that it was not a data holder, since the majority of their data comes from other sources (for example, national data sources), and data cannot be requested from the agency by those external to it.

Once agencies were identified, one research team member conducted online research to

identify information about each agency and its programs, as well as agency processes for collecting, using, and sharing data pertaining to children and youth in Baltimore City. To gather additional information, this team member identified at least one contact person per agency through websites or professional connections and scheduled an informal Zoom meeting or phone call to discuss data sharing within and outside of their agency (see Appendix A for a list of questions used in these meetings). One agency responded to questions via email. Overall, agency contacts responded quickly—typically within 1 week—and were responsive to meeting requests. When an incorrect contact was identified, they provided introductions to the correct contact. A team member took notes during these meetings and follow-up emails were used to clarify items as needed (see Figure 1 for the project timeline).

Analysis

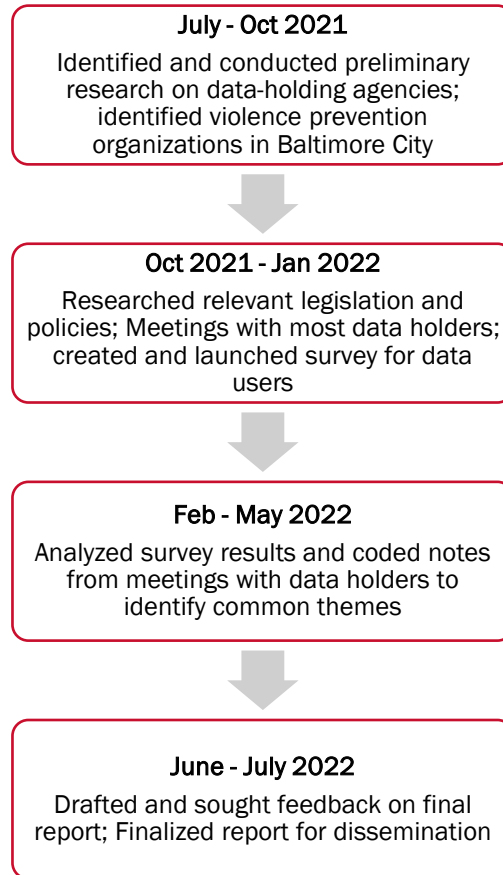
Our team combined information on data holders gathered online and in meetings to produce summaries on data-holding agencies included in this report. To help ensure accuracy and transparency, we emailed data holders the agency-specific summaries included in this report to provide an opportunity for review and editing prior to report distribution.

To analyze closed-ended survey questions, we calculated the frequencies of specific responses. Data holder information found online, notes from meetings with data holders, and the responses to open-ended questions on the data user survey were hand coded by one team member to identify strengths and challenges of current data-sharing practices in Baltimore City. A second team member then reviewed the codes and further collapsed related codes into broader themes. We used all data gathered for this report as well as the professional experiences of our research team to develop recommendations for enhancing data-sharing practices in Baltimore City, which are presented later in this report.

Survey of Data Users

Data users include youth-serving community organizations that may have a desire or need to access data from data holders. Youth-serving violence prevention organizations in Baltimore City were identified through an online search and team members' professional experiences. We initially identified 23 organizations and, using organization websites, we developed a spreadsheet containing organizations' names, websites, and descriptions. Points of contact were selected at each organization by drawing on our research team's professional

Figure 1. Project Timeline



connections and website contact listings.

We developed a survey for data users using the Qualtrics survey management platform. The anonymous, voluntary survey included 4 multiple-choice and 2 open-ended questions developed by our research team. These questions asked about organizations' data needs and usage (see Appendix B for survey items). Two team members shared the link to the survey to recruit participants. One team member sent the link to organizations they had worked with previously, and the other team member sent the link to the remaining organizations. One representative from each of 8 organizations completed the survey.

Key Definitions

Individual-level data: Individual-level data includes information on individual people or events (for example, records of individual students' grade point averages [GPAs]).

Aggregate-level data: Aggregate-level data combines data on individual people or events to provide summary information about a larger group (for example, average GPA for all students in a school).

Public Information Requests: The Maryland Public Information Act [PIA] established procedures, regulations, and limitations around public information requests [1]. All public agencies, officials, and branches of government in the state are subject to the PIA. Agencies created by a legal statute and nonprofit organizations incorporated under the state's general corporation law may be subject to the PIA. Public records include any records that are made or received by 1 of these agencies in the conduct of public business. Individuals and organizations can request these records through a public information request made to the agency, according to the guidelines set by the PIA.

Memorandum of Understanding: A memorandum of understanding (MOU) is an agreement that details the responsibilities and expectations of all parties named in the agreement. When related to data and/or research, MOUs, also known as "data use agreements," often include items such as how data will be stored, who is responsible for the data, who owns the data, and/or who may publish research produced by analyzing the data.

Data Holders

Information about data-holding agencies and the data these agencies collect, manage, and/or analyze was gathered from agency websites and conversations with agency representatives. The findings from these websites and conversations are described next, organized by agency (refer to Table 1 for example categories of data collected by each agency).

Maryland Department of Human Services

<https://dhs.maryland.gov/>

Agency Overview

The Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) oversees public assistance programs in the state of Maryland. The DHS is responsible for services such as food and cash assistance, child protective services, foster care, adult and elder abuse services, medical assistance, and workforce development [2]. The Maryland DHS has local offices in Baltimore City and each of Maryland’s counties, which manage child abuse reporting for that area [2,3]. This report focuses on child protective services and foster care services in Baltimore City.

Agency	Area ^a	Example Categories of Data Collected
Maryland Department of Human Services	State	Child Protective Services, In Home Services, Out of Home Services
Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD)	City	Neighborhood health, community health, health disparities, food insecurity among children, alcohol and substance use, births, deaths, life expectancy, hospitalizations, emergency department visits, sexually transmitted infections, data generated by BCHD programs
Baltimore City Public School System	City	Demographics, health, disciplinary information, attendance, standardized test scores, graduation
Baltimore Police Department	City	Youth crime, arrests, emergency calls, citywide incidents, programs with minors
Department of Juvenile Services	State	Juvenile offenses and complaints, complaint outcomes, court dispositions, probation, treatment service plans, youth risk level, youth need levels, youth community programs, and programs for committed youth
Maryland Longitudinal Data System	State	K-12 education, higher education, labor, juvenile services
Youth Data Hub	City	Education, health, housing, child welfare, employment, and justice

^a Geographic area of data collection

Description of Data and Data-Sharing Processes

The Maryland DHS collects data on youth in DHS programs, including Child Protective Services, In Home Services, and Out of Home Services. Requests for data are vetted by the DHS Communications Office. Initial requests made by outside organizations can be made to the Communications office, Executive Office, Operations Executive Office, or other personnel in the agency as appropriate for the request.

Public information requests can be submitted at the DHS website. An account is required to make a public records request, and requesters must declare if they are requesting data on

behalf of the media. Requestors should describe the type, dates, and method of the record and provide any documents to assist in the request. Any requests that concern 10 individuals or fewer will not be provided because of the potentially identifying nature of the data [2].

Notably, participant consent is needed for any personally identifiable data that will be shared as part of research, and an internal review board process is required for research proposals [2]. Aggregate-level data is published online at dhs.maryland.gov/business-center/documents. Data available at this website includes monthly child welfare reports with counts of cases involved in programs by county, including Baltimore City [2].

Baltimore City Health Department

<https://health.baltimorecity.gov/>

Agency Overview

The Baltimore City Health Department (BCHD) is the central health agency for Baltimore City. BCHD is responsible for addressing acute communicable diseases, disease prevention, emergency preparedness, environmental health, maternal-child health, school health, youth violence concerns, and COVID-19 response, among other health-related concerns in Baltimore City. The BCHD maintains an Office of Youth and Trauma Services to address violence among youth through public health programming and policies. Additional programs for youth include health suites and school-based centers, the Teen Pregnancy Prevention Taskforce, the Youth Advisory Council, and the Words not Weapons youth violence prevention campaign [4].

Description of Data and Data-Sharing Processes

The BCHD publishes aggregate-level datasets on their website at health.baltimorecity.gov/stats-and-data. Available datasets include neighborhood health profiles, life expectancy, health disparities, community health surveys, food insecurity among children, and alcohol and substance use reports. This page also includes links to other data sources related to health in Baltimore City [4].

Requests for aggregate data that are not available on the BCHD website can be requested through mail or email. Requesters must fill out the Public Health Data Request Form and include information such as type of data, variables, population of interest, time period, and geographic level (e.g., citywide, zip code, neighborhood). Available data includes aggregate births, deaths, hospitalizations, emergency department visits, sexually transmitted infections, and data generated by BCHD programs. Data may be suppressed to maintain confidentiality, such as in instances in which a person could likely be identified. Fees may be required if a request requires more than 2 hours of staff time to collate the data [4].

Researchers can request aggregate-level data from BCHD. All research projects require Public Health Research Review and approval through an Institutional Review Board

associated with the BCHD. Researchers may also need to submit a Public Health Data Request Form, depending on the nature of the project and a Data Use Agreement may be required. A collaborator from the BCHD is required for all research projects [4]. De-identified (i.e., data that does not include details that could lead to the identification of a particular person) individual-level data may be available for evaluation research.

Baltimore City Public School System

<https://www.baltimorecityschools.org/>

Agency Overview

The Baltimore City Public School System (BCPS) is a pre-K–12th grade school district serving Baltimore City. In the 2021–2022 school year, BCPSS included 155 schools and 7 non-school programs with 77,807 youth enrolled [5]. BCPSS also hosts a variety of programs for youth, including summer programs, in-person and virtual field trips, a Navigator Center to support high school graduates with the transition to career or college, free breakfast and lunch initiatives for all students, and a program that provides free snacks and dinners at after-school programs to eligible students [5]. In 2021–2022, 74.3% of students identified as African American, 15.7% identified as Hispanic or Latino(a), and 7.3% identified as White. Approximately 60.7% of students were identified as low-income [5].

Description of Data and Data-Sharing Processes

Student data collected by BCPS includes demographic information, health data, disciplinary information, attendance data, standardized test scores, and graduation data. Each year, the district conducts a School Climate Survey at each school which includes information on how youth feel about their school [5]. The district also participates in major national studies such as the Monitoring the Future survey from the University of Michigan [6], as well as other federally-mandated data-gathering initiatives.

All individual-level student and teacher data are legally protected, and those seeking access to data must undergo a formal process to submit a data request. Requesters must prove a significant purpose and need for the data, such as implementing a program for youth that requires the data. An MOU that specifies how data will be stored, used, protected, and maintained is required for data to be released to agencies. Parental consent is required for all data releases for students under the age of 18 per FERPA¹ regulations.

Through the BCPS' online Institutional Review Board (IRB) platform, researchers can make requests to collect their own data by conducting surveys with BCPS students and employees. Researchers must submit a research proposal for the project that will be reviewed by the

¹ The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) protects students' educational records and applies to all primary, secondary, and higher education institutions. Under FERPA, parents—until a student turns 18—and students have access to records and some control over the disclosure of personally identifiable information [9].

BCPS IRB. Research cannot burden students or teachers or unduly disrupt instruction, and all research team members must undergo a criminal background check before they are allowed to enter school buildings. Researchers must gain parental consent and student assent as required by age of the student and topic of the research [5].

The district releases aggregate-level data on their website at [baltimorecityschools.org/data](https://www.baltimorecityschools.org/data). Some data, such as disciplinary data, are not available on the website [5].

Baltimore Police Department

<https://www.baltimorepolice.org/>

Agency Overview

The Baltimore Police Department (BPD) is the municipal police force for Baltimore City. The BPD is divided into 9 districts with a central headquarters located in downtown Baltimore City. Targeted involvement with youth includes the Community Youth Services Division, which is responsible for community engagement and policing with youth and youth-serving organizations [7]. Other BPD units also interact with youth if youth are involved in incidents under their purview.

Description of Data and Data-Sharing Processes

Requests for police reports can be made by the public and victims of crimes. For vehicle-related accidents, the BPD uses an outside database, the LexisNexis Accident Report Site [8]. Requesters need to have the report number, last name and date of the incident, or the last name and street of incident to make such a request. There is a fee of \$14 per request. For non-vehicle-related accidents, requests can be mailed to the police department's Community Correspondence Unit. This request form is available at [baltimorepolice.org/obtain-police-report](https://www.baltimorepolice.org/obtain-police-report). Requesters should provide the report number, location of incident, date/time of the report, victim name, and any additional details. There is a \$10 fee for such report requests, except for offense requests made by the victim of the crime [7].

Public information requests to the BPD must be made in writing. To make a request, the requester should contact BPD's Office of Legal Affairs. Requests will be sent to the BPD's Document Compliance Coordinator, who will send the request to the appropriate unit to supply the data. The Document Compliance Coordinator reviews the data to determine whether to fulfill the request, and if deemed appropriate, fulfills the request [7].

The BPD publishes de-identified individual- and aggregate-level data on their website at [baltimorepolice.org/crime-stats/open-data](https://www.baltimorepolice.org/crime-stats/open-data). Published data include arrest data, emergency call information, and data on citywide incidents [7].

Department of Juvenile Services

<https://djs.maryland.gov/pages/default.aspx>

Agency Overview

The Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) is a statewide executive agency responsible for youth involved in the juvenile legal system in Maryland from initial complaint through re-entry into the community. DJS is responsible for intake, detention, probation, commitment, and after-care programs for juvenile-system involved youth. The Maryland DJS oversees 7 juvenile detention programs and 6 juvenile treatment programs. Other programs include community-based, at-home, or residential behavioral health treatment programs for eligible youth, an under-13 initiative for youth ages 12 and younger, and victim services for victims of juvenile crimes [10].

Description of Data and Data-Sharing Processes

Data tracked by DJS include juvenile offenses and complaints falling under the jurisdiction of juvenile court, outcomes of complaints (diversion from, or referral to court by DJS Intake), court dispositions, probation, treatment service plans, youth risk level, youth need levels, programs for youth in the community, and programs for committed youth.

Following the Crossover Youth Practice Initiative Model [11], case-level data (i.e., individual-level data) from DJS can be shared with Department of Human Services case managers if the case is related to a young person who is involved with both systems. Using a data dashboard, case managers from either agency can check if a youth shows up in the other system. This dashboard does not provide information other than the existence of the youth in the DJS or DHS systems, so case managers can then establish contact with the other agency to coordinate service delivery. The Maryland DJS also has data-sharing agreements with other states, including the District of Columbia, Virginia, and Pennsylvania, which allows for case-level data to be shared with a case manager if a youth in the juvenile legal system is from 1 of the states with an agreement.

DJS publishes some aggregate-level data. Aggregate data are primarily published through the DJS' annual report, which is available on the agency's website at: <https://djs.maryland.gov/Pages/Data-Resource-Guides.aspx> [10]. Additionally, DJS has established processes for sharing aggregate-level and/or de-identified individual-level data with researchers. Per Maryland statute, DJS can share data for research with an MOU. Research requests are approved by an internal research review board prior to the start of the research. DJS also has a research agreement with the School of Social Work at the University of Maryland, Baltimore in which research is conducted to validate risk assessment instruments and conduct other policy evaluation projects for DJS.

Public Information Requests can be submitted to DJS electronically. Responses to requests cannot include personal contact information, juvenile records, medical records, personnel records, social security numbers, financial information, attorney-client advice, attorney work

products, and/or investigatory records. DJS has 30 days to respond to the request and if a record is not released, will provide the statutory reason the record was not provided. Fees may be associated with requests for document search, review, and duplication [10].

DJS is a partner of the Maryland Longitudinal Data System (MLDS) and provides individual-level data that is combined with data from education and labor systems in MD, and made available as de-identified, disaggregated data for research and reporting purposes [12]. See the section on the MLDS below for more information on the uses of this data and accessing this information.

Maryland Longitudinal Data System

<https://mldscenter.maryland.gov/>

Agency Overview

The Maryland Longitudinal Data System (MLDS) Center develops and maintains a data system that contains student data from all levels of education and workforce data to provide analyses, produce relevant information, and inform choices to improve student and workforce outcomes, while ensuring the highest standards of system security and data privacy [12]. Maryland Code, Educ. § 24-702 established the MLDS as a statewide data system. The MLDS obtains individual-level data on education and workforce through data-sharing agreements with the Maryland Higher Education Commission, Maryland State Department of Education, Maryland Department of Labor, Maryland DJS, Maryland Department of Human Services, and Health Occupations Boards and Commissions. The MLDS uses data from the Motor Vehicle Administration to validate identities prior to de-identifying the data for research and reporting. Individual-level data are linked across years and sources, and then de-identified data are stored in a separate server for research [12].

Description of Data and Data-Sharing Processes

As of December 2021, the MLDS includes data on 3,752,474 individuals. Additionally, 1,803,828 individuals are in at least 2 of the following categories:

Table 2. Examples of Data Included in the Maryland Longitudinal Data System

Juvenile Services	Labor	Higher Education	K-12
Offense category	Industry	Major	Free/reduced lunch status
Placement type	Wage	GPA	English learner status
Adjudication decision	GED/Diploma status	ACT/SAT scores	Attendance
		Military status	

K-12, higher education, and workforce [12]. In addition to demographic information collected from participating agencies, Table 2 provides examples of available data [13]. The entire list of variables included in the MLDS can be found at mldscenter.maryland.gov/datainventory.html.

Per the Maryland PIA, the public has the right to review and obtain copies of public records, including documents and records relating to all aspects of the operations and management

of the MLDS Center and de-identified aggregate data maintained by the Center. For data requests, the following criteria apply: (1) the request cannot be related to a specific individual but can be related to a population; (2) the request cannot be identifiable based on size or uniqueness of the population requested; and (3) the request must be derived from data from 2 or more of the Center’s partner agencies. Any requests related to a single partner agency are referred to that agency. Requests for data can be submitted to the MLDS Center through their electronic form at mldscenter.maryland.gov/DataRequests.html or through mailing or hand-delivering the request to the Center.

Within 10 days, the Center will respond to a request for data with the requested information; a notification that the request has been denied with information on the reason for the denial; or a notification that the request is being fulfilled and information on the amount of time needed, reason for delay, and/or any associated fees. Fees are applied when more than 2 hours are spent preparing a public record or when hard copies are made. Appeals to denied data requests can be made through a judicial or administrative review [12].

The MLDS Center presents findings using the MLDS data through dashboards, reports, and a monthly research webinar series. These output products are publicly accessible through the MLDS website at mldscenter.maryland.gov/CenterOutput.html.

Youth Data Hub

<https://www.baltimorespromise.org/datahub>

Agency Overview

The Youth Data Hub from Baltimore’s Promise was established by Senate Bill 870 in 2022. This data hub will be an integrated data system that connects data from youth-serving agencies in Baltimore City. The Youth Data Hub plans to include data from education, health, housing, child welfare, employment, and justice systems, as well as some non-profit organizations [14]. The data will primarily focus on youth ages 14-21 but will include data on youth ages 0-21 who live in Baltimore City or who either attended or graduated from an elementary school, secondary school, or youth program in Baltimore City [15].

Description of Data and Data-Sharing Processes

Individuals and organizations will be able to request aggregate-level data from the Youth Data Hub through an external data request on their website. All data will be aggregate-level and de-identified. Data that pertains to fewer than 15 people will be suppressed to maintain confidentiality. Requests will be reviewed for the potential to link data to an individual and to ensure the request meets ethical standards [15].

The Youth Data Hub website will include a dashboard of aggregate-level data derived from the integrated data in the Youth Data Hub. The first years of the Youth Data Hub will primarily focus on establishing these dashboards and aggregating data. Currently, some aggregate-level data on outcomes of young people in Baltimore City is published on

Baltimore Promise's website at baltimorespromise.org/datascorecardmain. The information for the existing dashboard is derived from agencies in Baltimore City, including the Maryland State Department of Education, BCPS, and BCHD.

Data Users

Introduction to Organizations

The project team identified 23 youth-serving violence prevention organizations in Baltimore City through an online search and professional experience. This list of organizations is extensive but does not reflect an exhaustive list of violence prevention groups in Baltimore City. The included violence prevention organizations represented city ($n=7$), nonprofit or community ($n=9$), and university or hospital ($n=7$) organizations. Most organizations ($n=15$) are not youth-specific but rather have missions applicable to all ages, including youth.

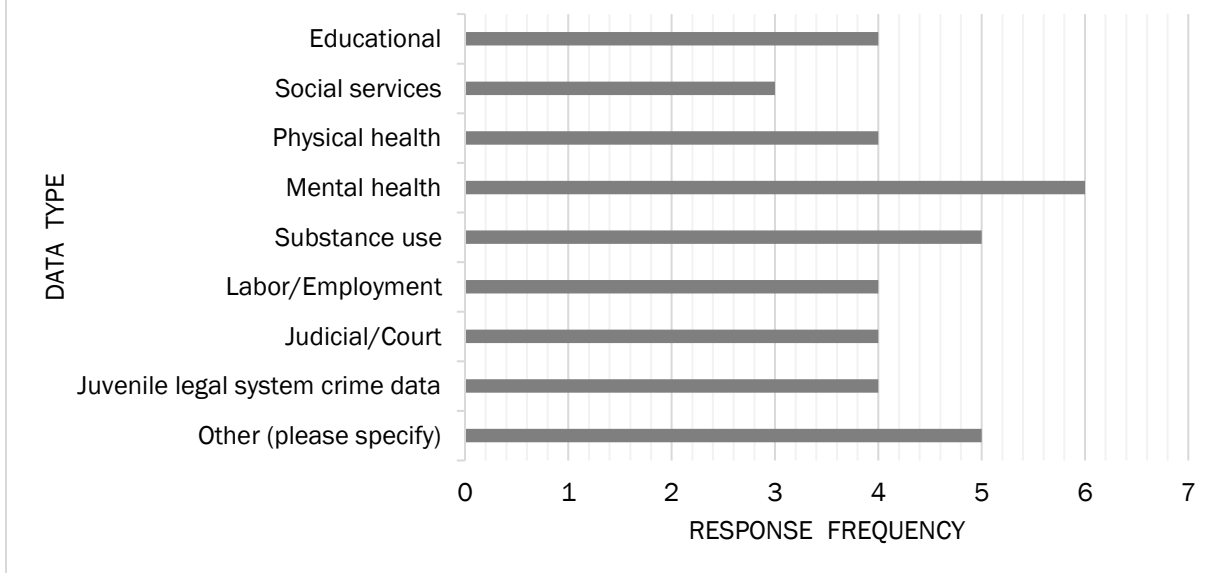
Data Survey

Our research team sent an anonymous, voluntary survey on organizational data use and needs to 21 of the identified violence prevention organizations. One organization was not included because it was entirely research-focused, and one was not included because a program contact could not be identified. Eight organizations completed the survey, for a response rate of approximately 38.1%.

Organizations answered closed-ended questions on how data informs their program(s), how their organization obtains data, and challenges to obtaining data, as well as open-ended questions on recommendations and additional information related to data sharing and usage (refer to Appendix A for the survey items).

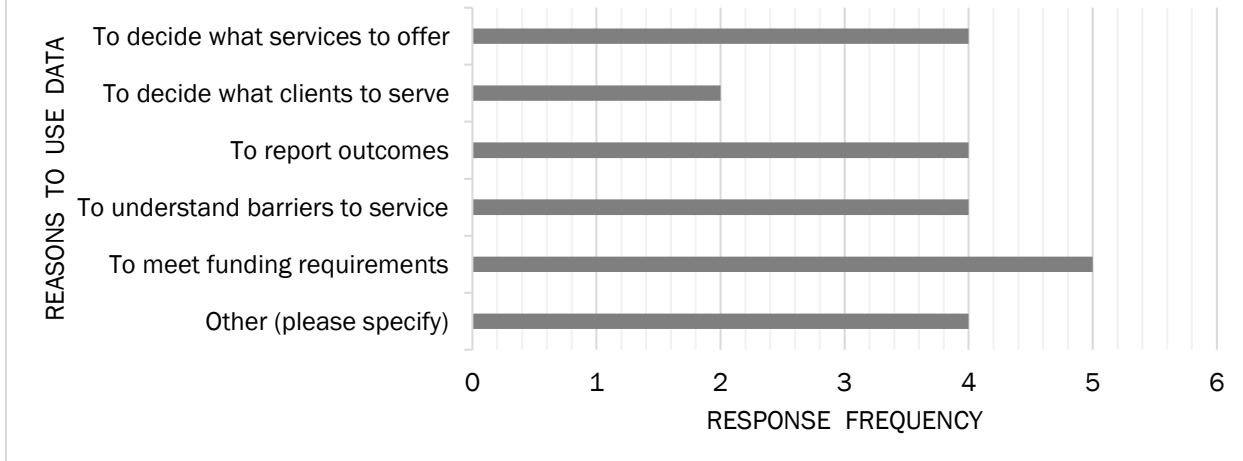
Participants reported that having access to a variety of data types would be helpful to their organization, though the most reported type was mental health data (6 of 7 respondents; 85.71%). Other data identified by participants included data concerning families impacted by violence, participation in faith-based groups, neighborhood organizations and assets, jail release dates, pending arrest warrants, and names of relevant youth (see Figure 2 for additional details).

Figure 2. Helpful Data Types for Violence Prevention Organizations



Of 7 respondents, only 2 (28.57%) reported using data to decide which clients to serve. The most common reason to use data was to meet funding requirements ($n=5$, 71.43%). Other reasons for data use included sharing the organization’s impact, monitoring staff wellbeing, knowing where violence is occurring, serving clients better, coordinating care, and understanding issues (see Figure 3 for additional details).

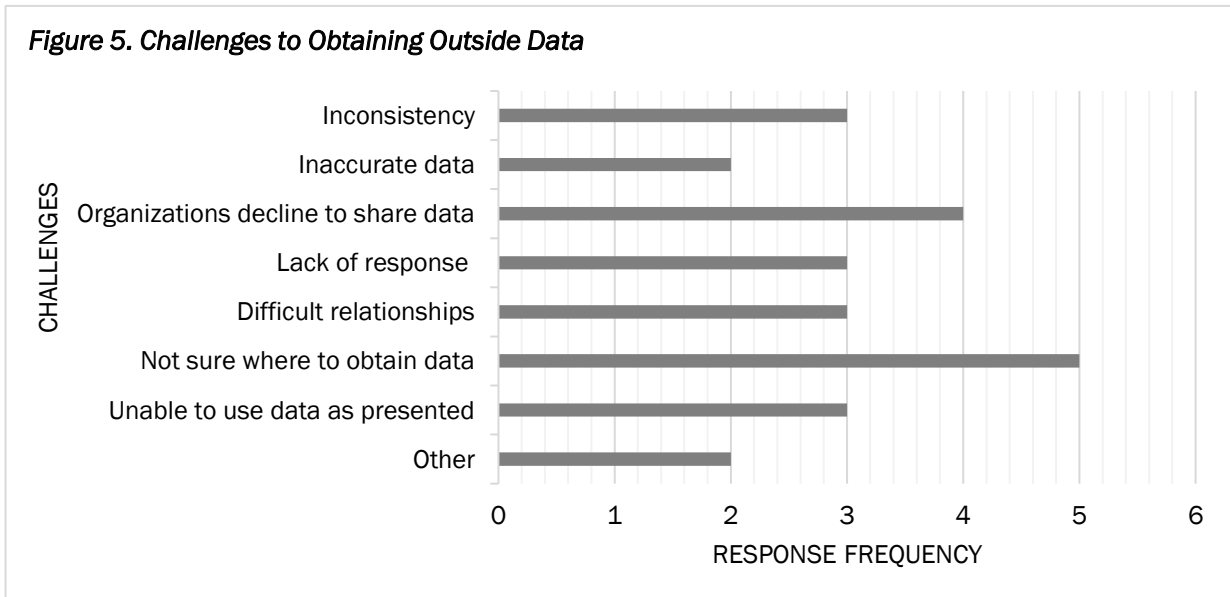
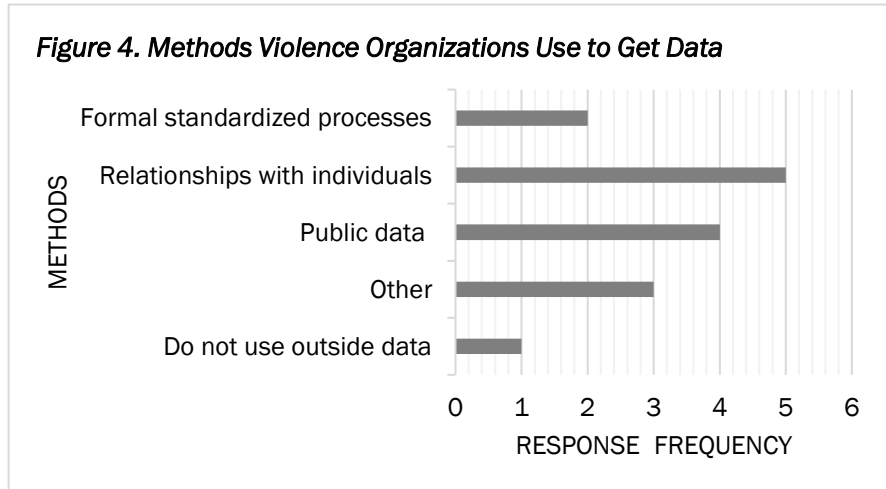
Figure 3. Reasons for Violence Prevention Organizations to Use Data



Participants were asked what approach their organization takes for accessing data collected by an outside organization (e.g., a data holder). The most common approach was through relationships with individuals, with 5 of 8 respondents (62.5%) reporting this approach. The least common approach was through formal, standardized approaches ($n=2$, 25%), and 1 participant (12.5%) reported their organization does not obtain outside data. Another

approach to obtaining data from outside sources included professional relationships without formal agreements (see Figure 4 for additional details).

Eight participants reported challenges to obtaining data from an outside organization. The most commonly reported challenge was not being sure where to obtain data, with 5 out of 7 (71.43%) respondents reporting this challenge. The least common challenge reported was inaccurate data ($n = 2$, 25%; see Figure 5 for additional details). Two respondents identified 1 challenge to obtaining data. Two respondents identified 2, 1 identified 5, 1 identified 7, and 1 identified 8 challenges. Other challenges to obtaining data included privacy, confidentiality, and legal requirements.



The survey collected qualitative data with the following questions: “Do you have any recommendations or solutions for challenges to accessing data that you named previously?” and “Is there anything else we should know related to data access or data sharing among youth-serving organizations in Baltimore City that we have not asked?” Qualitative responses were used to inform the strengths and challenges section of this report.

Potential Strengths and Challenges of Data Sharing in Baltimore City

Information gathered from online sources and meetings with agency representatives, as well as qualitative data from the data users survey highlighted both potential strengths and challenges related to data sharing in Baltimore City. These strengths and challenges are detailed next (see Table 3 for an overview). Importantly, given the small number of people from which data were gathered, direct quotes are not shared as they might easily identify individuals who participated in this effort.

Strengths

The current investigation showed 3 key strengths related to data sharing among child- and youth-serving agencies in Baltimore City. First, agencies that collect, hold, and/or otherwise manage data pertinent to serving youth and children in the City house a large amount of potentially useful data. As detailed above, these data include information on a wide range of areas that touch on child and youth service delivery and related outcomes.

Second, existing data can be, and at times are, used to assess youth program outcomes. If data are leveraged in this manner even within individual agencies, youth-focused programs and services could be evaluated and resultant data used to efficiently improve program outcomes over time.

Third, when data sharing occurs, this practice can help young people in a variety of ways. Agency representatives shared some examples of successful data sharing in which multiple agencies worked together to link and analyze data across various domains of wellbeing. One example of data sharing with positive outcomes is the implementation of the Crossover Youth Practice Model between DJS and DHS. When the Crossover Youth Practice Model was piloted in Prince George's County, many youth were identified as belonging to both the juvenile legal and child welfare systems. After the implementation of the Crossover Youth Practice Model, there were increased rates of interagency planning meetings and discussions of youth permanency [16]. Some agency representatives also shared aspirations related to data sharing, noting that if policies and practices were in place to allow for efficient and ethical data-sharing across agencies for specific purposes, youth could be better served. Data-sharing could result in decreasing burden on agencies as well as youth and their families by reducing duplicative data collection. In particular, decreasing

Strengths	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Data holders house a large amount of useful data• Existing data can be used to assess program and service outcomes• When data are strategically shared across agencies, the data can help young people in a variety of ways	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sensitivity of data• Infrastructure and capacity deficits• Lack of collaboration across data holders and users• Data literacy• Lack of data integration

the number of times youth and families are asked about trauma and sensitive topics can reduce the likelihood of re-traumatization that may result from repeatedly sharing personal experiences.

Challenges

This investigation also uncovered 5 interrelated areas of challenge for data sharing in Baltimore City. Data holders most commonly discussed difficulties related to sharing sensitive data, such as data related to mental health, substance use, or criminal activity. Legal statutes, including FERPA and HIPAA,² govern the use of certain types of data that would likely be helpful to share for service delivery improvement. Such statutes are complex and must be interpreted to identify if, when, and how private information concerning individuals can be shared outside of the agency that collected it.

The next most commonly discussed category of challenges were infrastructure and organizational capacity deficits. Multiple agency representatives noted problems with the functionality of databases; for example, the various databases used within and across agencies are not necessarily able to “talk to each other” or easily share data between them. Further, agency employees using the databases might need specialized training to use these systems. Additional challenges in this area included having too little staffing or funding to feasibly engage in sharing data with external organizations. Such barriers may include not having enough time to field and fulfill data requests or not having employees with the expertise necessary for such efforts, being new to the process of data sharing across organizations and thus not having systems in place for doing so, and/or a need for more formalized agreements to guide data sharing.

Third, some agency representatives shared that a lack of collaboration among data holders and data users has posed challenges for data sharing. For example, some individuals noted that this lack of collaboration can relate to agencies being protective of their data and, as such, not agreeing to share it. Relatedly, others noted the need for clear agreements to be put in place for such sharing to occur.

Fourth, several agency representatives noted that data literacy poses barriers. For example, not all employees of data-holding or data-using agencies have expertise in collecting, managing, and/or analyzing data to inform service delivery.

Fifth, a few representatives identified that a lack of data integration, in other words that data are collected and live in many different locations, poses a barrier to sharing data. Relatedly, these conversations highlighted that in many situations, substantial expertise is needed to know how to manage and analyze, and in particular link, separate data sources, and

² The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) protects medical records from being disclosed without patient knowledge or consent. HIPAA establishes guidelines for the sharing of medical records within and among agencies to protect the confidentiality of patients [17].

preparing data to be shared takes a significant amount of time and effort. As such, readying data to be shared, even for what might be considered simple descriptive analyses, can be very a resource-intensive undertaking.

Recommendations

Information gathered from conversations with data holders, the data user survey, and the authors' professional experience informed the recommendations in Figure 6. These recommendations are intended to help inform future data-sharing policies and practices in Baltimore City, MD with a primary focus on ensuring data equity. Such processes and systems could then, in turn, be used to more efficiently and effectively guide behavioral health service provision for children and youth who are impacted by trauma and violence.

Figure 6. Recommendations for Enhancing Data Sharing and Data Equity in Baltimore City, MD



Conduct Research

Using community-engaged methods, **investigate**: (1) what **data-related education** could be provided, (2) how to make the education **accessible** for data holders and users, and (3) how to **increase intra- and interagency collaboration** regarding data

Learn from and identify ways to **build upon the infrastructure of existing data repositories** like the Maryland Longitudinal Data System and the Youth Data Hub

Identify **exemplar data-sharing** processes and systems within and outside of Maryland to use as models in Baltimore City



Build Capacity

Provide **education** on the benefits of data-driven service delivery, which data are available, and how to access and use data to inform service delivery

Improve organizational **websites and publicly available information** about which data are available and how to access them, including centralized lists of available local and national data

Create and share **standard templates** for data-sharing agreements and **clear recommendations** for how agencies can approach intra- and interagency data sharing



Implement Policy

Interpret existing and potentially create new policies to **make clear the ways in which sensitive and identifying data can and cannot be shared** across agencies for specific purposes, developing a standard for agencies to follow

Advocate for the **expansion of existing data repositories** (e.g., the Maryland Longitudinal Data System and Youth Data Hub)

Advocate for **additional funding** to support the activities named here

In order to simultaneously improve existing data-sharing policies and practices and ensure data equity among diverse Baltimore City communities, we recommend: (1) conducting additional research to inform future data-sharing efforts; (2) building capacity for data-driven service delivery, and (3) both advocating for and implementing policies that govern data sharing in the City. Here, the term data equity “...refers to the consideration, through an equity lens, of the ways in which data [are] collected, analyzed, interpreted, and distributed” [18, para. 2], including how these processes encourage or discourage marginalized communities’ ability to both access and have control over their own data [19].

The first recommendation calls for additional research on data-sharing best practices, building upon the contents of this exploratory report. Using community-engaged methods with a focus on data equity, we recommend investigation of: (1) what data-related education could be provided, (2) how to make the education accessible for data holders and users, and (3) how to increase intra- and interagency collaboration regarding data. In line with an equity lens, such research will help ensure that future efforts concerning data sharing in the City are grounded in actual community desires and needs, with attention to issues like: who can access community data?; who owns the data?; and how are data being used? Additionally, future research efforts should include learning from and identifying ways to build upon the infrastructure of existing data repositories like the MLDS and Youth Data Hub, as well as identifying exemplar data-sharing processes and systems within and outside of Maryland to use as models in Baltimore City. Each of these research efforts should be completed in partnership with community members.

Second, we recommend building capacity for data use and data sharing among municipal agencies and grassroots community organizations. Ideally, these efforts would be grounded in findings from the research tasks listed above and offered in formats identified as accessible and effective by community members. Such educational opportunities might involve providing information on the benefits of data-driven service delivery, which data are available/can be accessed and by whom, and how to access and use data to inform service delivery. In addition, we recommend that data-holding agencies improve agency websites and publicly available information about which data are available and how to access them, also offering centralized lists (e.g., on a website) of available local and national data if possible and desired by community organizations. Last, providing templates for data-sharing agreements and recommendations for intra- and interagency data sharing might help promote data sharing; however, we recommend exploring with community agencies and organizations whether offering such documents would in fact be helpful before spending time crafting such templates. Working in partnership with community organizations to identify appropriate strategies for promoting data sharing is critical to creating useful data-sharing practices and policies.

Third, we recommend putting effort into policy advocacy and implementation to support data sharing among Baltimore City agencies and organizations. Ideally, these efforts would include interpreting existing policies and potentially creating new policies/protocols that make clear the ways in which sensitive and identifying data can and cannot be shared across agencies for specific purposes. This effort would ideally lead to the development of a

set of clear standards for Baltimore City agencies and organizations to follow, guiding both intra- and interagency data sharing. Additionally, policy work would include advocating for the expansion of existing data repositories like the MLDS and Youth Data Hub, as well as partnering with policymakers and community members to advocate for additional funding to support the activities named in these recommendations. For more information on potential concrete implementation steps for each of these 3 categories of recommendations, please refer to Table 4.

Table 4. Potential Implementation Steps for Each Data-Sharing Recommendation	
Recommendation	Potential Implementation Steps
Conduct Research	
Investigate data-related education needs and how to provide accessible educational opportunities	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify an appropriate team to conduct the research tasks listed in this table. Team members should have research training and be credible messengers (i.e., trusted, engaged community members) in the communities in which they are conducting research. 2. Identify funding for the research tasks listed in this table. 3. Employ community-engaged methods with an equity lens, such as a participatory action or community-based participatory research framework, to identify municipal agency and community organization employees' educational needs regarding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Their understanding of and opinions about the purpose and importance of data-driven service delivery; ○ Topics that might be included in such educational opportunities; ○ In what form and how (e.g., didactic trainings from credible messengers; video tutorials; individualized consultations) educational opportunities should be offered to ensure they are accessible to and meet the needs of diverse community audiences; and ○ Ways to increase intra- and interagency collaboration concerning data collection, analysis, and sharing to inform service delivery.
Build upon existing data repositories	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Maryland Longitudinal Data System and Youth Data Hub represent 2 data repositories with Baltimore City data. Future data-sharing research efforts should seek to answer the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ How can these repositories be leveraged (e.g., their infrastructure, the specialized expertise of their employees, linked data they contain) to better support data-driven service delivery in Baltimore City?; and ○ How might Baltimore City expand existing repositories to support efficient data-sharing practices in Baltimore City?
Identify exemplar data-sharing processes and systems	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Baltimore City might benefit from exploration of exemplar data-sharing processes and systems that exist both within and outside of Maryland. Through online research and drawing on professional connections, the identified research team should seek to learn about how other cities/locations handle data-sharing and best practices that might be useful to implement in Baltimore City.

	<p>2. Have the findings from this exploration vetted by various Baltimore City stakeholder groups (e.g., community members, grassroots organizations, municipal agencies, and more) to identify what, if anything, might be useful to implement in Baltimore City and how to implement these practices.</p>
<p>Build Capacity</p>	
<p>Provide data-related education</p>	<p>1. Grounded in findings from the research tasks listed in this table, identify credible messengers who are also trained in research methods to develop and deliver data-/research-related education to municipal agency and grassroots community organization employees and other key stakeholders. This education should be offered in the formats (e.g., didactic trainings from credible messengers; video tutorials; individualized consultations) identified as accessible and effective by community stakeholders. Educational topics might include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The benefits of data-driven service delivery; ○ Which data are available to those working in the City; ○ How to access and use data to inform service delivery; and/or ○ Program evaluation (data collection, analysis, and reporting).
<p>Improve organizational websites and publicly available information about data</p>	<p>1. Currently, the availability and clarity of information about what data are available and how to access these data varies across data-holding agencies. Data-holding agencies might consider:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Reviewing their internal data-sharing policies and protocols; ○ Internally clarifying which data they collect and details concerning how these data may or may not be shared within and outside of their agency; and ○ Creating a single webpage that can be easily found on the agency website (if this does not already exist) that describes what data the agency collects; how the data are used; and how the data may or may not be accessed, by whom. <p>2. The City of Baltimore might also consider the utility of having a website that contains data profiles for each data-holding agency. Data profiles could include information on categories of data collected, contact information for the person who reviews and responds to data inquiries, and details on procedures for obtaining data. The creation of such a website would require funding support, coordination across agencies, and updates over time. It is unclear at this time whether such a website would be useful to the community; community stakeholders should be consulted about this topic before its creation.</p>
<p>Provide templates for data-sharing agreements and recommendations for intra- and interagency data sharing</p>	<p>1. Many different templates exist for data-sharing agreements. Some agencies and organizations might benefit from having access to such a template. This is a topic to be explored specifically with data-holding and data-using agencies to determine whether such a template would be useful and if so, how to effectively distribute the template. If the City has a data-focused website, downloadable, editable template(s) could be provided on this website.</p>

Implement Policy	
<p>Make clear the ways in which sensitive and identifying data can and cannot be shared across agencies</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify an appropriate team to conduct the policy-focused tasks listed in this table. These individuals should have research training and be credible messengers (i.e., trusted, engaged community members) in the communities in which they are working. 2. In partnership with community stakeholders, identify and interpret existing policies and participate in the creation of new policies/protocols that make clear the ways in which sensitive and identifying data can and cannot be shared across agencies for specific purposes. This effort would ideally lead to the development of a set of clear standards for Baltimore City agencies and organizations to follow, guiding both intra- and interagency data sharing. This effort could involve: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Conducting online research to identify and understand policies (e.g., FERPA, HIPAA) that govern sharing of particular categories of data; ○ Drafting informational materials (e.g., a one-page description, training materials) that describe these policies; and/or ○ Incorporating this information into educational opportunities for community stakeholders. 3. Have these findings and any materials produced by this team vetted by various Baltimore City stakeholder groups (e.g., community members, grassroots organizations, municipal agencies, and more) to identify what if anything might be useful to implement in Baltimore City.
<p>Advocate for the expansion of existing data repositories</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify and work with individuals with power in the City (e.g., city council members/policymakers, municipal agency leaders) to develop a viable strategy to advocate for the expansion of existing data repositories. For example, the MLDS is governed by state legislation, and changes to this system cannot be implemented without policy change. Advocating for its expansion requires partnering with lawmakers who can champion such changes.
<p>Advocate for additional funding</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Locate funding for the efforts named in this table. Each of these activities will require funding support, funding which could be allocated by the City, applied for (e.g., through local, state, federal, or foundation grants), or wrapped into existing scopes of work. It is likely that finding such funding will require some combination of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Advocating for funding at the local level; ○ Applying for local, state, federal, and/or foundation grants; ○ Partnering with municipal agencies and grassroots organizations to identify ways to collaborate on these efforts; and/or ○ Disseminating this report and additional materials developed in future efforts focused on enhancing Baltimore City data-sharing policies and practices.

Conclusions

Agencies located in Baltimore City collect, analyze, and report on a wide variety of data specific to children and youth, including young people impacted by trauma and violence. Existing data can be used to assess child and youth program and service outcomes, and when data are strategically shared across agencies, the data are likely to help City agencies and organizations improve child and youth well-being in a variety of ways. To enhance current data-sharing practices, this investigation underscored the potential importance of conducting additional research to inform data-sharing practices, building the capacity of data-holding and data-using agencies' to both share and use available data in ethical and effective ways, and both advocating for and implementing policies that support intra- and interagency data integration and exchange.

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Appendix A: Meeting Questions for Agencies³

- What data do you collect on youth?
- Can you share blank copies of forms that you use to collect data with us? (e.g., intake forms, surveys, progress notes, etc.)
- What data can be shared inside your organization?
 - How do people request data internally?
- What data can be shared with other agencies?
 - How do other agencies request data?
- What data can be shared with the public?
 - How does the public request data?
- What differences are there in your approach to data sharing for aggregate and individual level data? What differences are there in the data that is available at the individual and aggregate levels?
- What organizations in Baltimore City do you collaborate with to support youth?
 - Do you have formal or informal agreements with these organizations? If formal, what are these agreements and can you share them with us?
 - Who is involved with these collaborations? (What positions or people?)
- What laws, policies, or agreements influence your data sharing procedures?
- Are there barriers to data sharing across systems and, if so, what are they?
- Are there outcomes or program implementation that are limited because of lack of data sharing?
- Are there policies or limitations that people requesting data should be aware of?
 - (E.g., nothing with less than 10 items in that cell are available)

³ Questions were adjusted as needed prior to each meeting according to the agency's mission. For example, questions for data repositories (i.e., Maryland Longitudinal Data System and Youth Data Hub) did not include questions on direct data collection but included questions on collecting data from partner agencies and organizations.

Appendix B: Survey for Data Users

You are receiving this survey because you work at a valued youth-serving organization in Baltimore City. A team at the University of Maryland, Baltimore, School of Social Work is collecting information with this survey in an effort to better understand how data or information about children and youth exposure to violence and trauma is shared among Baltimore City government agencies (e.g., Police Department, Department of Social Services, etc.) and additional youth-serving organizations. We are trying to understand and map what information is being collected, how information can or cannot be accessed and shared across organizations, and how this information could inform service delivery and a system of care for this group of young people. Your answers to these questions will help us understand current data collection and sharing as well as potential barriers to data collection and sharing.

Please note, this work is funded by the National Association of County and City Health Officials. Survey participation is completely voluntary. All answers are anonymous and will be reported only in aggregate form.

Data definition: "data" refers to any information that can be used to describe, justify, or support service delivery (for example, information on organizational operations, services, clients/patients). Data might be collected internally (by an organization about their own operations) or externally (by an outside organization).

Which data are helpful or would be helpful for your organization to have access to? ***Please check all that apply.***

- Educational
- Social services
- Physical health
- Mental health
- Substance use
- Labor/Employment
- Judicial/Court
- Juvenile legal system crime data
- Other (please specify)

What approach, if any, does your organization take to getting data that is collected by an outside organization? ***Please check all that apply.***

- Formal standardized processes (e.g., submitting public information requests or through formal agreements)

- Relationships with individuals (e.g., through a personal connection)
- Public data (i.e., utilizing publicly available data sources such as BNIA or CDC data)
- We do not access outside data
- Other (please specify)

How does your organization use data? Please note, these data could be collected internally by your organization or accessed from an outside data source. *Please check all that apply.*

- To decide what services to offer
- To decide what clients to serve
- To report outcomes
- To understand barriers to service
- To meet funding requirements
- Other (please specify)

What are challenges to obtaining data from an outside organization (i.e., getting access to data that your organization does not collect itself)? *Please check all that apply.*

- Inconsistency (e.g. data sources not available every year)
- Inaccurate data
- Organizations decline to share their data
- Lack of response when trying to obtain data
- Difficult relationships
- Not sure where to obtain data
- Unable to use data as presented (e.g., difficult to understand formats)
- I do not know
- Other (please specify)

Do you have any recommendations or solutions for challenges to accessing data that you named previously (i.e., more transparent and accessible methods for requesting data)?

Is there anything else we should know related to data access or data sharing among youth-serving organizations in Baltimore City that we have not asked?