



# THE KUJICHAGULIA CENTER

Sinai Hospital of Baltimore | Baltimore, MD

## Overview

As Sinai Hospital of Baltimore delved into social determinants of health experienced by its patients, a need to link patients to a broad range of public assistance, education, workforce development, and social service programs to resolve barriers to health was identified. Unemployment, untreated mental health disorders, drug addiction, family violence, and homelessness all posed a threat to the health of families. Further, our most recent community health needs assessment revealed that youth violence was a major concern of residents. Focus groups with adults and youth revealed that concentrating on youth employment would be effective in addressing youth violence as a public health concern.

The Kujichagulia Center (KC) was launched with a Mayor's Office of Human Services "Human Services Local Impact Aid for the Park Heights Master Plan Area" grant in January 2014, utilizing "slots" revenue to create positive programming for youth who reside in northwest Baltimore zip code 21215. KC targets and engages the most at-risk youth and young men – especially those with histories in street violence – with intensive services including life skills, mentoring, and workforce development programs to create transformative long-term change and personal growth.

KC recently entered a partnership with Safe Streets Park Heights to increase the number of clients referred through the Street Violence

Intervention Program (SVIP) at Sinai. These participants are identified in the emergency department (ED) or the trauma unit at Sinai and encouraged to become KC participants as a method of exiting the cycle of street violence. The hospital responder visits the patient at bedside to establish a relationship based on the familiar "window of opportunity" that opens when a critical health issue forces the person to consider lifestyle changes that lead to improving health conditions.

KC has become a known resource for young adult males of the community. Our staff actively mentors the 50 clients (active plus alumni) who have come through the program. Our participation in community activities through membership in the Park Heights Service Providers Network, Park

Heights Renaissance, Safe Streets Park Heights, Neighborhoods United, and other community-based events has brought increased attention to our program and its goals for reducing youth violence and preparing young men for employment.

## Impact

Among the 33 clients enrolled in KC since the inception of the Street Violence Intervention Program (27 new clients enrolled beginning January 2017), there has been a 75 percent reduction in inpatient admissions within 30 days of the intervention. In the Workforce Readiness/Life Skills program, 27 active and 7 new clients participated; 70 percent (5 of the

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7 new clients) completed Workforce Readiness and Life skills training; 80 percent (4 of the 5 clients with completed training) completed internships; 88 percent (30 of the 34 active clients) received assistance with job placement; and 53 percent (16 of the 30 clients) are currently employed. For the Middle School Mentoring program, 96 students engaged in the “Dare To Be King” curriculum over 29 weeks during FY17; 88 percent was the average attendance rate.

## Lessons Learned

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In recent cohorts, the program director has noted that some clients may have developmental disabilities that they have not disclosed to the program. Of particular concern are clients who have previously been on medication for ADHD or ADD and are no longer taking their prescribed medications. These clients are inclined to demonstrate impulsive, immature, or inappropriate behavior in the workplace. We’ve found that extensive one-on-one mentoring, job shadowing under supervision, and personalized training are essential to help the young person adjust to the inflexible demands for consistent self-regulation employers require. The program director has begun asking clients if they had an Individualized

Education Plan in school, and requesting access to the plan if necessary to ensure that the client is receiving the appropriate accommodations during course activities and in internship assignments.

## Future Goals


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It is expected that the recent expansion into the ED – as well as removal of age limitations for eligibility – will greatly increase the number of young men receiving SVIP services, so we’ll reach more youth, and even adults, with the message of avoiding retaliation and getting out of the cycle of violence. Recognizing a rise in street violence among women, the program has also been expanded to serve women of all age groups.

## CONTACT

### Mae Hinnant

Director, Grants Administration

 410-601-4440

 [mhinnant@lifebridgehealth.org](mailto:mhinnant@lifebridgehealth.org)