



Hope Through Housing Foundation

Violence Prevention Program: Year 1 Evaluation Report

*Funding Provided Through Department of Justice
Edward Byrne Justice Memorial Grant*

Purpose of Violence Prevention Program

In May 2007, National Housing Development Corporation (NHDC) was awarded an Edward Byrne Justice Memorial Grant to develop and pilot a violence prevention program in 10 Hope Through Housing After School and Beyond programs. The goals of the violence prevention program were to:

- Identify an evidence-based violence prevention curriculum appropriate for after school programs in a housing-based setting.
- Develop an implementation strategy that includes staff development and training.
- Study the impact on after school program quality.

- Understand the factors influencing successful implementation so the program can be replicated successfully in housing-based programs

Why Violence Prevention in After School Matters

In the last decade compelling evidence has emerged that identifies a link between after school program participation and the prevention of violent behavior in children and youth. Studies have shown that unsupervised youth are most at risk of perpetuating and becoming victims of crime between the hours of 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. Minority and low income children are particularly vulnerable to this risk.

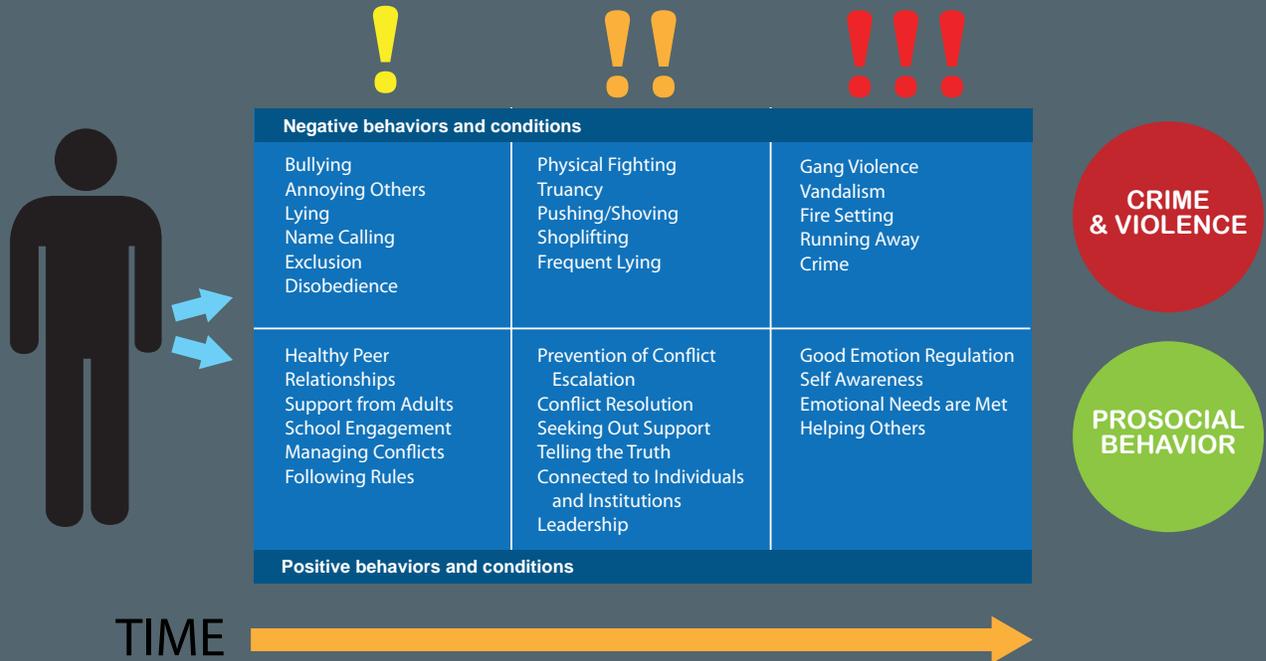
National Housing Development Corporation serves economically disadvantaged youth who are among the most at-risk

populations for being involved in acts of violence. Typical family earnings of NHDC residents range from 35% to 50% of the area median income.

Quality after school programs offer all youth a safe haven to: connect with caring adults, learn essential new skills, get academic assistance, and establish positive relationships with peers – outcomes that promote healthy, successful development. These supports are particularly important for youth living in our communities who face multiple risk factors such as poverty, exposure to crimes of violence, and low academic achievement.

HOPE's vision is for youth to be academically competitive and prepared for life-long learning.

Figure 1.



Overview of the Violence Prevention Program

NHDC's violence prevention program was designed and implemented by Hope Through Housing Foundation (Hope), a nonprofit that provides social services to NHDC communities. Hope's signature after school program, *After School and Beyond*, is implemented by Hope employees or contracted staff. Where services are offered by contracted agreements Hope establishes and measures program standards, mandates program quality through systematic evaluation practices, and offers staff training and technical assistance to maintain continuous quality improvement feedback systems.

Program Expectations

Each program site implements core best practices in their after school program. Sites are expected to achieve quality standards

Our program's strategy is directed at reinforcing attitudes, knowledge and behaviors that are highly related to healthy emotional, social and academic development.

(as measured by the School Age Care Environmental Rating Scale, an industry standard for program quality) within each best practice:

- Homework assistance
- Academic support through hands-on learning projects
- Physical activity and recreation
- A nutritious snack
- Life skills development, such as career exploration, job skills and daily skills (e.g., budgeting, cooking)

All providers are required to communicate regularly with participants' parents/guardians. This fosters a continuum of care so that after school programming extends in-school and in-home learning.

Violence Prevention Model

Hope's program model is designed to prevent the onset and escalation of children's behaviors strongly associated with crime and delinquency (see Figure 1). This approach stands in contrast to violence intervention programs that target youth who have already exhibited violence or delinquency behaviors. After School and Beyond youth may or may not be on the path to violence and delinquency.

Hope's program emphasizes giving youth the skills and tools needed to get back on or stay on the path to positive developmental outcomes.

This model offers a good fit with the population: youth attending Hope's

Table 1. List of Pilot Sites for Violence Prevention Program

<i>Partner Organization</i>	<i>Apartment Community</i>
Hope Through Housing Foundation Escondido San Marcos	Cobblestone Village Villa Serena/Paseo del Oro Sierra Vista
Camp Fire USA – Mt. San Antonio Council Rancho Cucamonga Alta Loma West Covina	Monterey Village Mountainside Sycamore Springs Sunset Heights (March 2008) Promenade
Camp Fire USA – San Diego & Imperial Valley Council San Marcos Santee	Melrose Villas Shadow Hill
National City Collaborative National City	Vista del Sol



Phase 1: Program Planning & Evaluation Design

Program Planning. Hope contracted with a consultant to identify an evidence-based violence prevention curriculum that has successfully been implemented in after school settings. Table 2. lists the criteria used to select the curriculum.

After reviewing three curricula, **PeaceBuilders** (published by **PeacePartners**) was selected. The curriculum includes individual lessons that reinforce six conflict resolution concepts:

- To praise people
- To give up put-downs
- To seek wise people
- To notice hurts and speak up about hurts
- To right wrongs
- To help others

This research-validated violence prevention program is approved for the federally-funded Safe and Drug Free Schools Act and has been shown to reduce aggression, promote language development, and increase prosocial skills among youth. In addition, it is approved for use both in school and out-of-school programs.

Evaluation Design. National Community Renaissance’s Research and Evaluation Department developed an evaluation that answers three key questions:

programs are predominantly young (the majority of youth are between Kindergarten and 3rd grade) and, while they live in a high-risk environment, are not yet involved in delinquent behaviors. Hope’s approach is important because the measures used in our program are not focused on negative behaviors such as criminal or delinquent behaviors among program participants.

Ten After School and Beyond programs were initially selected as test sites for this project. Sites were identified on the basis of the following criteria to ensure appropriateness to the project:

- Buy-in from program and organization leadership

- A willingness of staff to participate in trainings
- Compliance to basic program quality standards
- Medium to high need for violence prevention and conflict resolution

A new program site, Sunset Heights (located in Alta Loma, CA), came online in March 2008 and was added to the original 10 pilot sites because it met all of the inclusion criteria and demonstrated a high level of student and family need.

The project was implemented from May 2007 through May 2008 and divided into three phases:



1. What does **PeaceBuilders** implementation look like in the affordable housing after school environment?

2. How well do after school program participants respond to **PeaceBuilders** implementation?

3. How does **PeaceBuilders** implementation affect programming?

To answer these research questions, a range of program quality measures were used including structured observations, student and staff surveys and focus groups.

The School Age Care Environmental Rating Scale (SACERS)

The SACERS measures adult-child interactions, program safety, program administration, and program activities. For the purpose of this evaluation, the team focused on adult-child interactions, physical safety, and program administration.

Program quality is a strong indicator of program impact. Research has shown that programs that demonstrate strong adult-child relationships and a positive climate are likely to have measurable impacts on youth learning and development. In contrast, programs that lack a positive climate have

Table 2 - Criteria for Curriculum Selection

- Curriculum is focused on developing social-cognitive skills (such as empathy, impulse control, anger management) necessary to avoid conflict and violence.
- Curriculum is appropriate for a wide age range (grades K-12).
- Curriculum is appropriate for culturally diverse youth.
- Curriculum has substantial activities to implement over time.
- Activities do not require a large amount of preparation on the part of the instructor.
- Materials are available in Spanish.
- Curriculum complements (not compete with) existing program curricula that is used by program staff.

little ability to impact youth, regardless of the quality of academics or curriculum.

PeaceBuilders Implementation Measure

A **PeacePartners** measurement instrument was adapted to examine the level and quality of **PeaceBuilders** implementation. Specifically, the team documented the extent to which program staff met minimal implementation requirements and created a positive, peace building atmosphere in the program.

The evaluation team conducted two three-hour site observations. The first observation was conducted about 10 weeks after the start of the program; the second was conducted at the end of the program year.

The team observed components of the **PeaceBuilders** program, including:

- PeacePledge recitation
- Use of PraiseNotes by students and staff
- Use of **PeaceBuilders** language by students and staff
- **PeaceBuilders** activities



Students also completed a survey that included feelings about their after school program and participation in **PeaceBuilders** activities.

A staff survey was developed to assess staff experience, education and training needs. It was administered to all site level staff during the last month of program.

Staff and student focus groups were conducted at three sites to gather qualitative data about the implementation of **PeaceBuilders**.

As part of the project, Hope purchased City Span, an online data tracking system. This system provided attendance and student demographic data for this report.

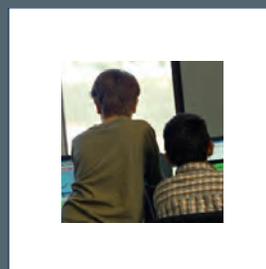
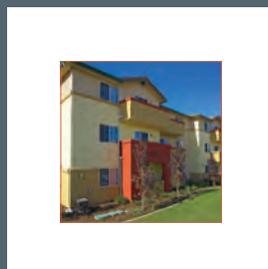
Phase 2: Staff Training & Program Implementation

Program staff of the 10 pilot sites participated in a 4-hour **PeaceBuilders** training. All staff were asked to meet minimal implementation requirements:

- Recite the PeacePledge daily. This pledge establishes a culture of peace in the learning center and reinforces the language and concepts of the program.
- Create a PraiseBoard and regularly distribute PraiseNotes to youth. This technique rewards positive youth behavior.

*Table 3.
Program Participation*

	Average per Site (range)	Total
Average Daily Attendance	16 Students (6.9 to 26.7)	176 Students
Unduplicated Students	51.1 Students (19 to 91)	613 Students
Duplicated Program Days	118.6 Days (68 to 196)	1,423 Days
Duplicated Service Hours	1,844 Hours (589 to 3,447)	22,126 Hours





- Use **PeaceBuilders** language on a regular basis to reinforce the culture of peace in the learning center.

- Implement at least one **PeaceBuilders** activity per week. Staff were encouraged to adopt one PeacePledge concept per month and implement corresponding activities of their choice.

Staff were also asked to participate in Hope-led meetings and trainings on behavior management, activity development, program administration, and youth development.

Evaluation Findings

Program Participation and Characteristics

PeaceBuilders sites served a total of 613 unduplicated students during the grant period, with an average daily attendance of 16 students per site per program day. Value ranges are provided to demonstrate the variety of program sizes and site capacities that were included in the pilot study.

Depending on the site, between two and five program days were available per week for an average of 118.6 days per site and a total of 1,423 duplicated program days for the grant period. Over 20,000 hours of

Table 3.
Participant Demographics

Characteristic	Categories	Percent of Students
Grade Level	K-3rd	41%
	4th-6th	37%
	7th-8th	14%
	9 – 12th	8%
Gender	Males	50%
	Females	50%
Ethnicity	American Indian/Alaska Native	1%
	Asian/Pacific Islander	3%
	African American/Black	15%
	Hispanic/Latino	70%
	Caucasian/White	12%
Limited English Proficiency	Yes	4%
	No	51%
	Unspecified	46%
Free/Reduced Lunch	Yes	56%
	No	2%
	Unspecified	42%

direct service units were provided across the pilot sites.

Student Characteristics

Demographic information was available for 606 of the 613 participants (99%); all information was self-reported by parents or guardians during program enrollment via

the program registration form.

Students participating in the **PeaceBuilders** Pilot Study were primarily in grades kindergarten through 6th (78%) and identified themselves as Hispanic/Latino (70%; see table 3). Only 4% of students reported having Limited English Proficiency but 46% did not specify, so this percentage



is likely much higher. Fifty-six (56%) of families reported their children were eligible for free or reduced price lunch; another 42% did not specify (only 2% reported they were not eligible for free or reduced price lunch) suggesting a high level of socioeconomic need among students and their families which is consistent with the income limits required to live in affordable housing.

PeaceBuilder's Implementation

Observation Data. Trained observers visited each site twice – once ten weeks into implementation of PeaceBuilders curriculum and again at the end of the program year. Observers were provided with formal training and demonstrated acceptable levels of inter-rater reliability with one another prior to conducting observations. Observation periods were for the entire three hours of program time and included interviews with site staff either before or after program. The observers visited all National CORE sites and were blind to whether each site was participating in the PeaceBuilders' project.

Figure 2.

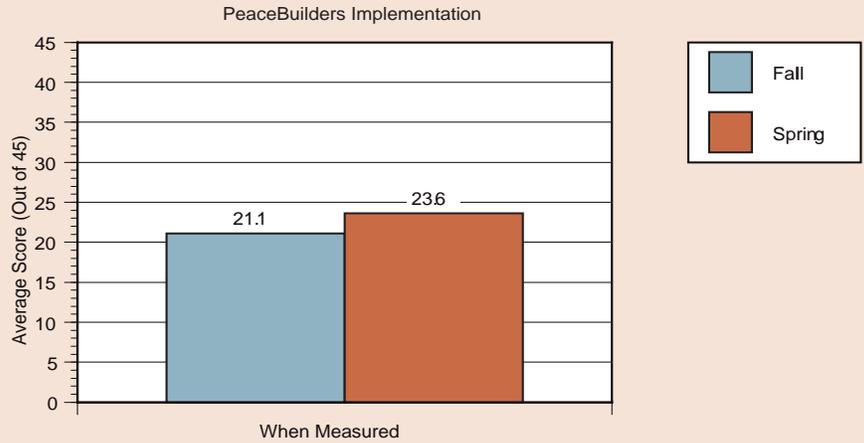


Figure 3.

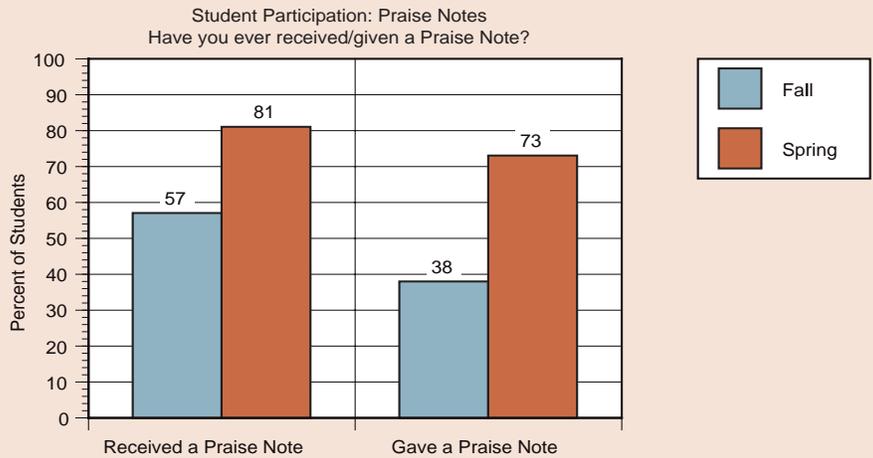
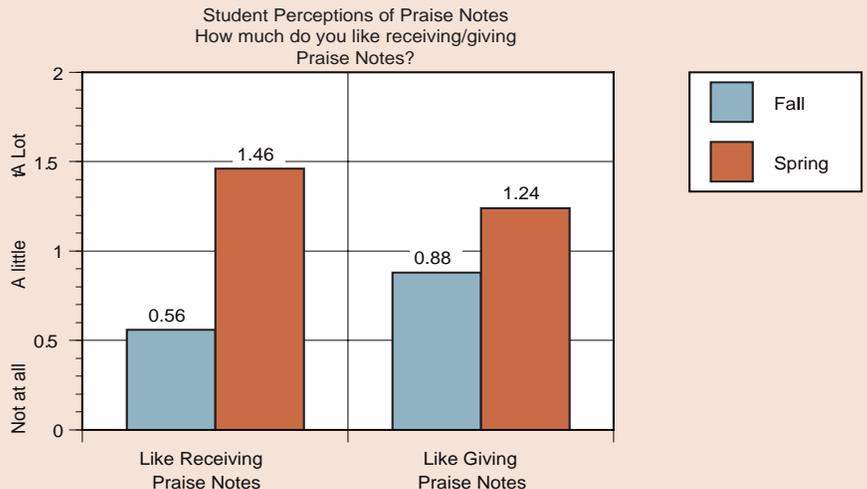


Figure 4.



Sites were rated across multiple items in two broad categories: Artifacts and Environment. Artifacts include visible, concrete evidence of implementation of **PeaceBuilders**. This included items such as:

- Pledge is posted in a conspicuous location
- PraiseBoard present in the program space
- **PeaceBuilders**' curriculum activities observed

The **PeaceBuilders**' Environment scale included practices and behaviors demonstrated to support the creation of a positive environment, such as:

- Use of **PeaceBuilders**' language by adults and students
- Evidence of **PeaceBuilders**' principles in student work
- Use of Praise Notes to reinforce positive behavior

Items from both scales were combined to create the implementation score; possible values ranged from 0 to 45 for each observation periods. Analyses were conducted for the 8 sites where both Fall and Spring data was available from observations and averages are illustrated in Figure 2.

There was promising increase in average implementation level over time; however there is substantial room for improved implementation. In the fall the highest rated site achieved 60% of points possible and in the spring the highest rated site achieved 82%.

Participant Outcomes *Student Participation and Attitudes about **PeaceBuilders** Over Time*

We examined students' participation in and attitudes about two key **PeaceBuilders** activities over the program implementation period: Receiving and giving Praise Notes.

PeaceBuilders and Performance on SACERS

Group	Percent of programs at or above threshold	
	Interactions	Program Structure
Not a PeaceBuilders Site (n=4)	25%	25%
Lower Level Implementation (n=5)	20%	0
Higher Level Implementation (n=4)	50%	50%

Students were asked to report whether they had ever given and received Praise Notes and how much they liked receiving and giving Praise Notes as a part of a larger student survey that was administered in the Fall and Spring.

These measures are good indicators of children's participation in the **PeaceBuilders** program and also validate the observational findings. While very simple, PraiseNotes are important because they are used to acknowledge positive behavior and ultimately to change the culture of the program. PraiseNotes help establish a norm of prosocial behavior which is proven to ultimately protect kids from delinquency and violence.

More students reported having given or received a PraiseNote in the Spring compared to the Fall (figure 3). Students also reported an increase in positive

feelings associated with giving and receiving Praise Notes over time (see figure 4).

Taken together, these findings substantiate the observation that implementation was better over time, most likely due to the ongoing training and support provided by Hope staff. It also suggests genuine culture change in programs.

Evidence from focus groups with students also suggests that they enjoy participating in the **PeaceBuilders** program and that positive culture shift is beginning to occur.

Feelings About School

We compared pre and post-test scores on the FAS. Overall, students showed a significant increase in FAS scores over the school year, indicating more positive attitudes towards school, teachers and



learning however the size of the increase was not dependent on the level of **PeaceBuilders** implementation.

Staff Findings and Insights

Data from program staff was gathered using a survey (conducted at the end of year) and interviews that were conducted mid-year to identify the barriers and supports to implementing **PeaceBuilders** from the point of view of staff.

Staff Characteristics

Program staff had an average age of 23 years, were 67% female and 79% highest level of education was a high school diploma. Forty-eight percent of staff had less than one year of experience working with children in after school or a similar setting. The average hours worked in program per week was 21 hours, but 50% of staff work 15 hours a week or less. All staff all had positive comments about the **PeaceBuilders** curriculum and the supportive trainings that were offered in conjunction with **PeaceBuilders**. Most had observed improvement in the behavior of individual children and in the culture of the

program at their site. One staff member commented, “It is a part of the culture and is working in the behavior of the kids.” Barriers to implementation included the time dedicated to homework, access to materials to implement **PeaceBuilders** activities and getting parents involved in the program.

Based on implementation levels from Fall and Spring implementations, sites were broken into two groups: lower and higher level implementation. We examined staff perceptions of their programs for these two groups and found some interesting trends. Staff at higher level implementation sites felt more capable of dealing with diversity issues and felt staff-child relationships were more positive at their sites than did staff at lower level implementation sites. While neither difference was statistically significant, it suggests **PeaceBuilders** may provide a valuable support for staff. In the next year of this evaluation, we will conduct staff surveys at both the beginning and end of the year to more closely examine these trends.

Students weigh in on the PeaceBuilders Program:

“I used to have a lot of problems, fights non-stop. The more I learn PeaceBuilders, the better it gets.”

“It feels great (to give a Praise Note), you’re making someone else feel happy. That is the best part.”

“I help more people.”

“We are nicer to each other now since we have come to program.”



“PeaceBuilders is valuable. The values are laid out for you; there is a problem and a solution.”

--After School and Beyond Staff Member

Impact of PeaceBuilders on Attendance

We examined the impact of PeaceBuilders on program attendance. We calculated the percent of programs from each group that met their average daily attendance target. Across the entire program year more high level implementation sites met attendance goals (50%) than either lower-level implementation (38%) or non-PeaceBuilders sites (40%).

Impact of PeaceBuilders on Program Climate and Structure

We examined the quality of staff-child interactions and program structure on the SACERS for non-PeaceBuilders sites compared to lower and higher level implementation sites. An average scale score of 5 or greater indicates good program quality, so scores for each group were compared against this threshold.

In both cases, program sites in the higher implementation group for PeaceBuilders were more likely to achieve good scores on

the SACERS, an observational measure that is not related to PeaceBuilders. This suggests that PeaceBuilders does provide an effective structure for staff that in turn, increases program quality. One staff member from a high implementation site noted, “It helps staff to have wording to use with the kids when they are given the PeaceBuilders values to teach.”

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

- The PeaceBuilders curriculum, in combination with staff training and development, is an effective tool for creating a positive program climate, reinforcing positive youth behavior, and building program staff’s knowledge of positive behavior management.
- A high level of PeaceBuilders implementation is linked to student recruitment and retention. This result is a built-in incentive for programs that are falling short of attendance goals.



• The program is effective for housing based after school programs. The program can be scaled up to include additional program sites.

• Hope should expand **PeaceBuilders** training to include NHDC Property Management and families of youth enrolled in After School and Beyond. This would build parents' capacity to reinforce violence prevention concepts at home and within the affordable housing community.

Next Steps

For program year 2008-09, Hope Through Housing Foundation will expand the violence prevention program to 13 After School and Beyond programs, including one 9-12th grade high school program.

To strengthen the program, Hope will:

Create a training structure for all After School and Beyond Programs that includes monthly phone check-in meetings, quarterly face-to-face meetings with program staff, and biannual all-day trainings with all program staff. Hope held its first all-day training in October 2008. This training included a 4-hour **PeaceBuilders** training and workshops on behavior management and linking program activities to skills development.

• Publish a monthly e-newsletter to all program staff. The newsletter will include reminders and suggestions for **PeaceBuilders** implementation and best practice activities for After School and Beyond.

This project was supported by Grant No. 2006-DD-BX-K278 awarded by the Bureau of Justice Assistance. The Bureau of Justice Assistance is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Justice, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the Office for Victims of Crime. Points of view or opinions in this document are those of the author and do not represent the official position or policies of the United State Department of Justice.





*Serving Families
Where They Live*



HOPE THROUGH HOUSING FOUNDATION
9065 HAVEN AVENUE, SUITE 100, RANCHO CUCAMONGA, CA 91730
PHONE (909) 483-2444 • WWW.HOPETHROUGHHOUSING.ORG



HOPE through HOUSING
FOUNDATION

