



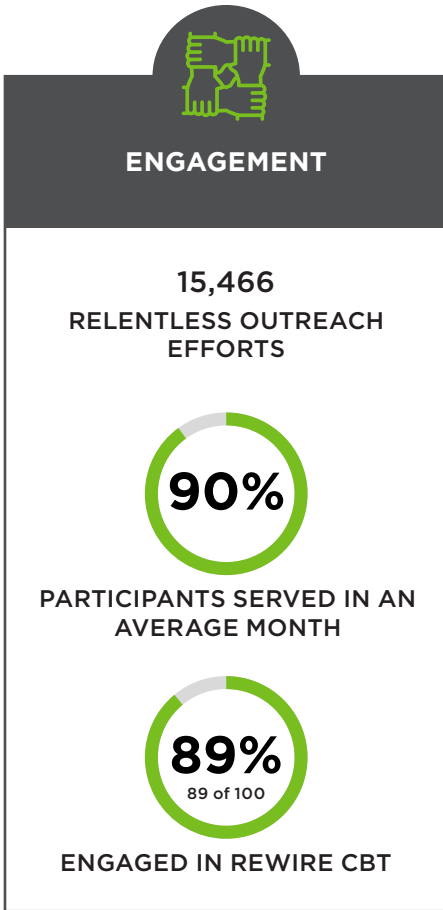
ROCA HARTFORD

2-YEAR YEAR REPORT

PERFORMANCE DATA AND PROGRAM OUTCOMES
OCTOBER 1, 2021 — SEPTEMBER 30, 2023

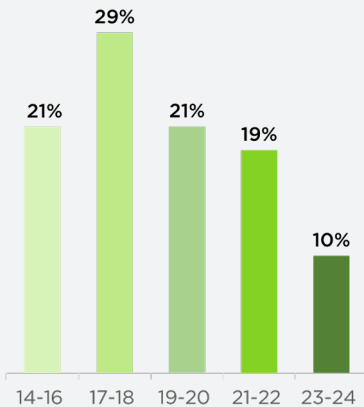
IMPACT

SINCE OCTOBER 2021, WE SERVED **100** OF THE HIGHEST-RISK YOUNG WOMEN IN CONNECTICUT WITH AN **80%** RETENTION RATE.

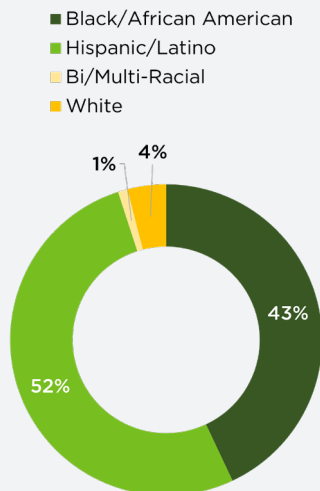


POPULATION SERVED

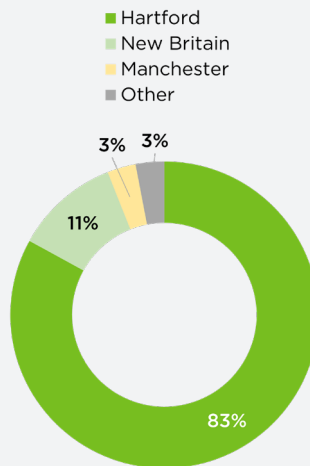
AGE



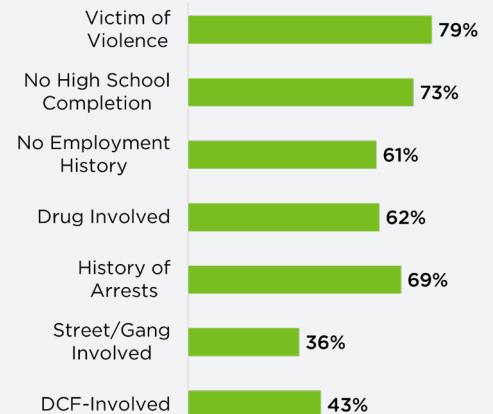
RACE/ETHNICITY



CITIES



RISK FACTORS



WHAT WE'RE SEEING

Young women, most of whom are mothers, at **acute, elevated risk** of gun violence.

- Women increasingly the actors in violence as well as victims.
- Many young mothers are separated from their children.
- Surge in sex trafficking and intimate partner violence involving guns.
- Violence sparked on social media.

Front-line **staff are now at higher risk** of experiencing gun violence.

There is a dramatic need for sharpened focus and collaboration around safety in community violence intervention (CVI) work.

HOW WE'RE RESPONDING

Roca uses **Rewire CBT** to help young people break free from the impacts of trauma, slow down, breathe, and take an 8-12 second pause before a conflict ends in injury or death.

Roca is also implementing sweeping operational updates to **safety protocols**.

- Added new roles at various sites: Outreach & Safety Manager; Front Desk Security Attendants.
- Expanding/re-emphasizing safety checklists.

We are tightening **collaboration with our partners**.

- Increasing work with law enforcement.
- Making systems more gender responsive.
- Identifying barriers caused by multi-systems involvement (e.g. child welfare and criminal justice).

We are a **focused deterrence model**.

- Working with those at highest risk of violence.
- Collaborating with criminal justice partners.
- Offering full wrap-around services and a CBT-based approach.

STEMMING THE TIDE OF VIOLENCE



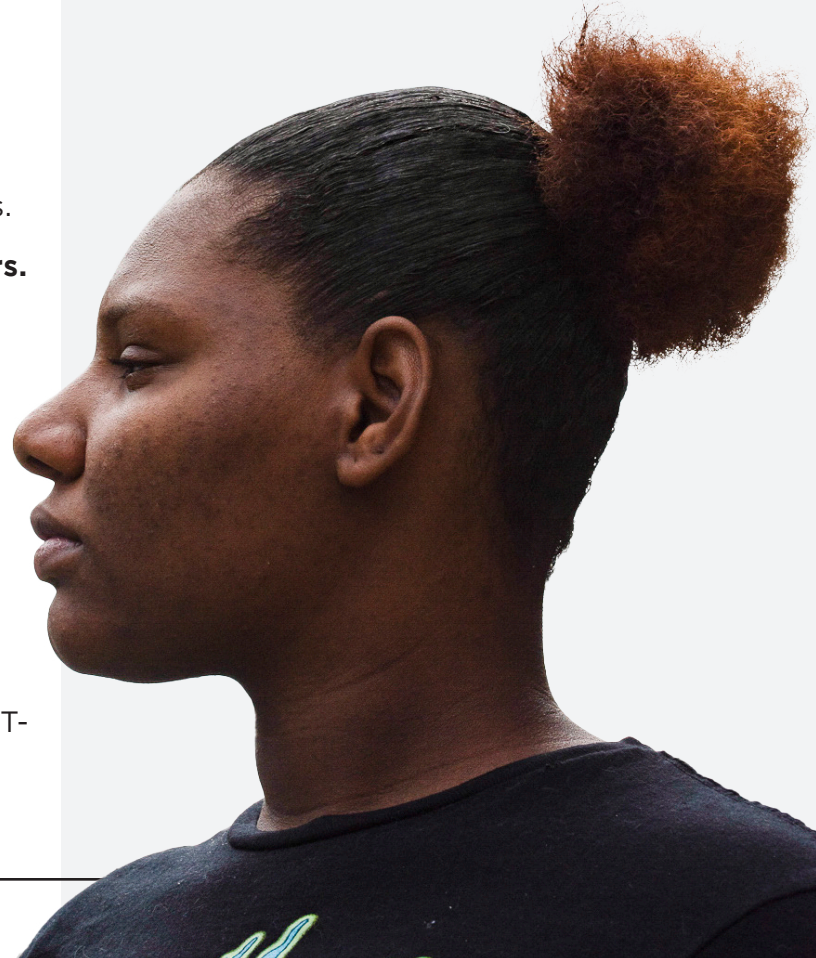
WE IDENTIFY AND FOCUS ON THE YOUNG PEOPLE MOST LIKELY TO BE INVOLVED IN VIOLENCE



WE UTILIZE RELENTLESS OUTREACH TO ENGAGE THEM AND BUILD TRUST. WE NEVER GIVE UP



OUR EVIDENCE-BASED MODEL IS ROOTED IN BRAIN SCIENCE TO HEAL TRAUMA AND PROVIDE THE SKILLS TO CHANGE BEHAVIOR



INTRODUCTION

The landscape of violence among women in Black and Brown communities has worsened in the short time since the pandemic. Guns are easier for young people to get and conceal; women are increasingly involved in trafficking; and trauma is acute, complex, and chronic. And while men still account for the majority of people involved in violence and the criminal justice system, the proportion of women, including mothers, has been growing quietly but steadily over the past several decades in urban communities such as Hartford, Connecticut.

In October 2021, Roca opened its Young Mothers Program in Hartford, bringing our evidence-based model rooted in brain science. We reach and serve young women, with a focus on young mothers, to heal trauma and provide the skills to change behavior. The women Roca serves have experienced complex trauma, violence, and multi-system involvement.

Over the past two years, we have received 168 referrals and engaged 100 young women, 77% of whom are mothers. As Roca Hartford moves into its third year, two things are clear:

1. The overwhelming majority of young women we work with are young mothers who are at **acute-elevated risk** of being involved in, impacted by, and instigators of violence.
2. **We must urgently locate them and relentlessly engage with them** so they can begin their change process, using trauma- and gender-responsive approaches.

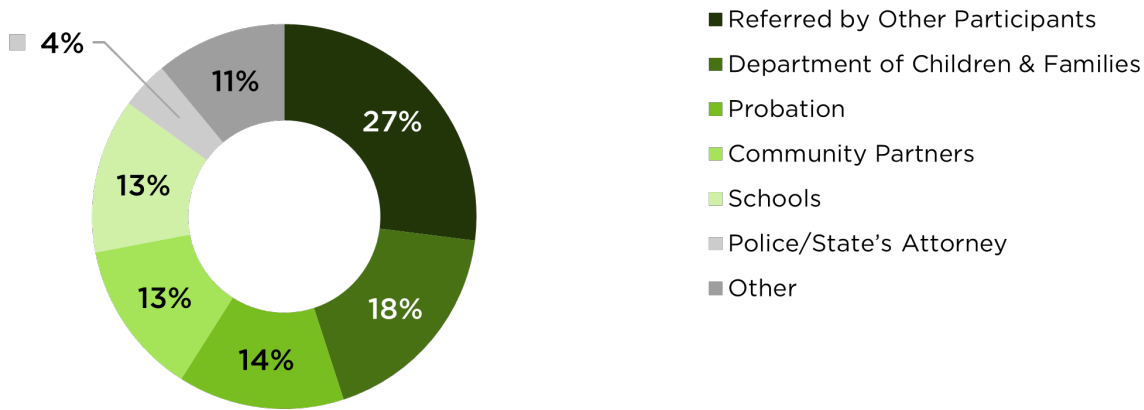
Thoughtful community violence intervention (CVI) for women calls for a focus on safety, brain science, and collaboration with key partners including law enforcement. Without these, the violence we see in our communities—and its impact on women and girls, especially young mothers—will only perpetuate further crises, including separation of young children from their mothers, injury, and early death.

It has been our privilege to serve the highest-risk young women and mothers in Hartford, and build relationships with community, state, and systems partners. This report summarizes data and observations from our past two years on the nature of Hartford young women's involvement in community violence—including what drives it, what challenges it presents, and what we must collectively do to address it.

PARTICIPANT REFERRALS, ELIGIBILITY, AND RETENTION

Over our first four years of operations, Roca Hartford plans to serve 250–300 young women and mothers. We have received 168 referrals in our first two years, over 80% of which were for young mothers.

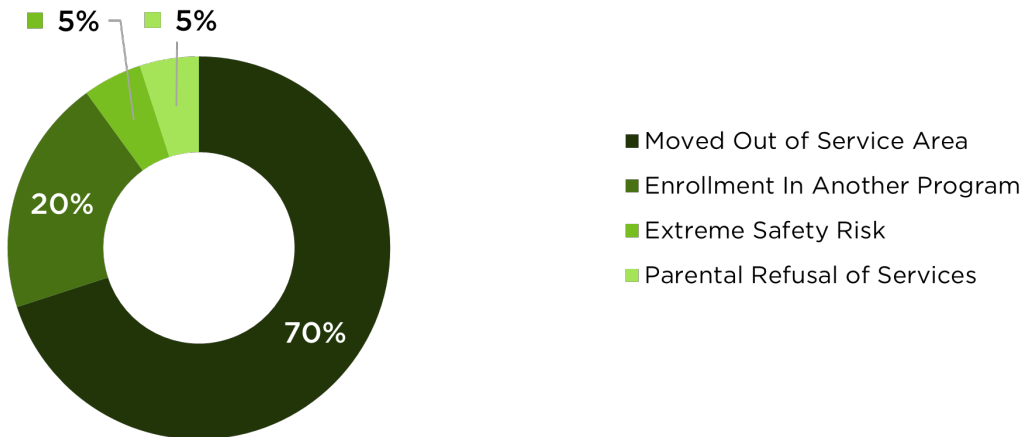
FIGURE 1: HARTFORD REFERRAL SOURCES



Of these, 100 were enrolled in active slots and 48 were found ineligible. The remaining 20 referrals were still being assessed for eligibility as of September 30, 2023, and 8 of those have subsequently been dismissed. At the time of this report, we are currently serving 80 young women, most of whom are mothers.

Roca Hartford's retention rate over the past two years was 80%. Twenty participants were dismissed from the program.

FIGURE 2: DISMISSAL REASONS FOR ELIGIBLE PARTICIPANTS (N=20)



By far the most common reason for dismissal was the participant moving out of our service area. We have found that young people in our target population, and especially young women, are extremely transient. This is often due to housing instability. Roca retains participants on caseload and continues to contact them for at least 90 days after moving out of the area, often helping them connect to other services.

PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS

Basic Demographics

Roca Hartford served a large proportion of younger women. 50% of participants served were between the ages of 14-18, with another 40% between the ages of 19-22. The majority of participants identified as non-White.

FIGURE 3: AGE RANGE

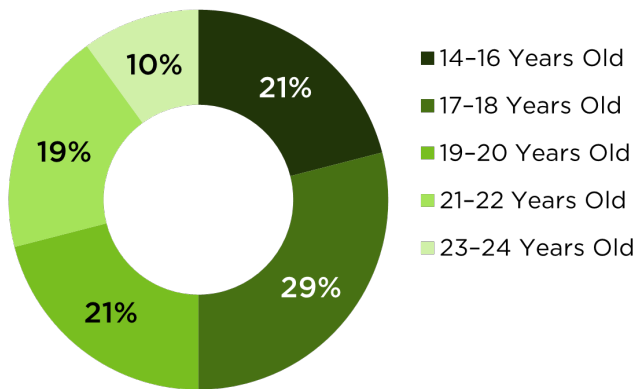
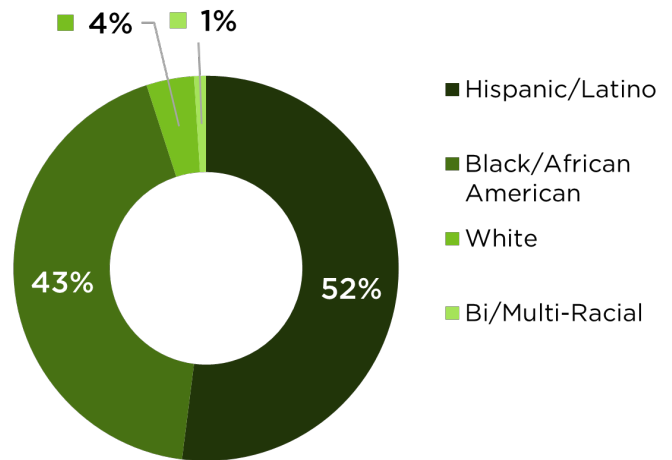
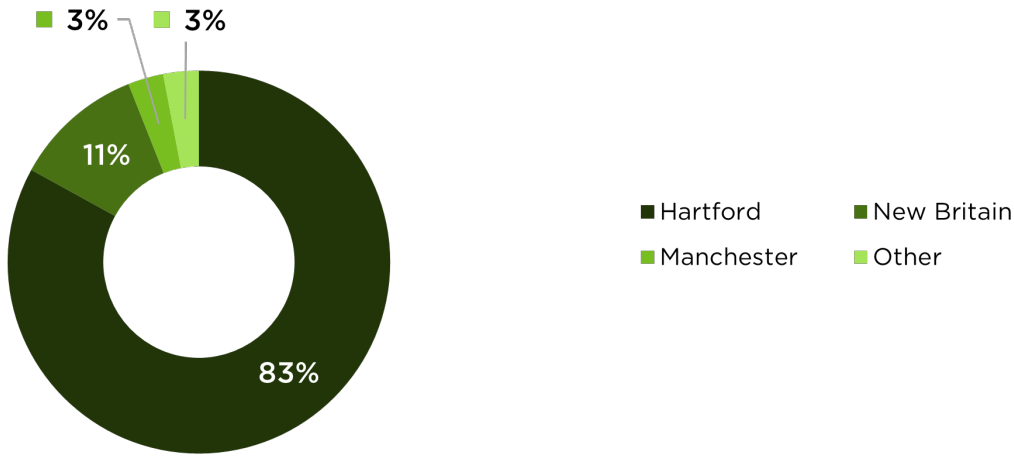


FIGURE 4: RACE/ETHNICITY



Roca Hartford’s service area includes Hartford, East Hartford, Manchester, New Britain, and Bloomfield, with the vast majority of participants coming from Hartford.

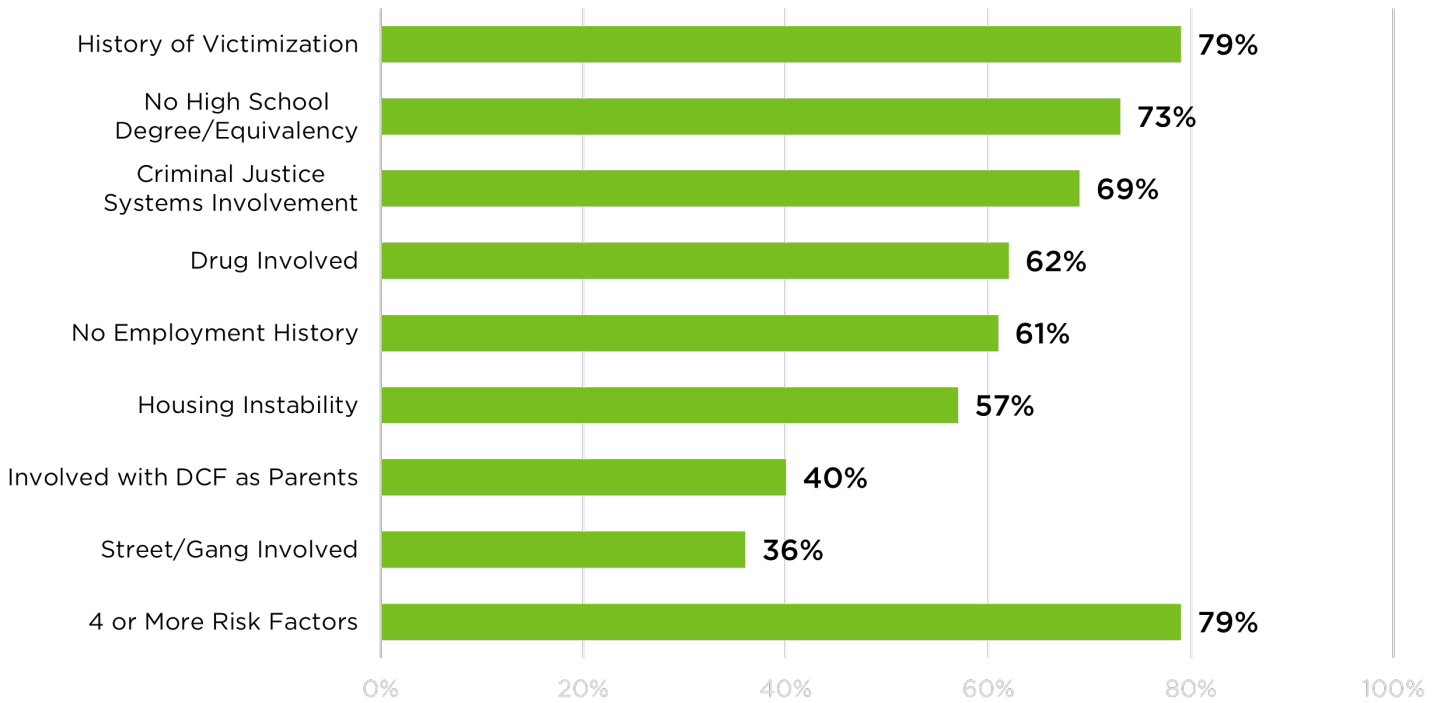
FIGURE 5: **CITIES SERVED**



Participant Risk Factors

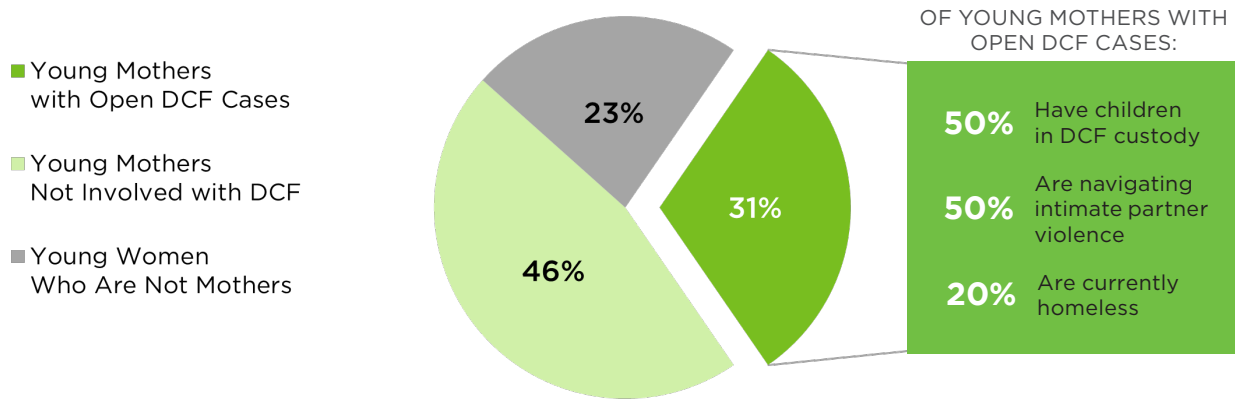
Roca Hartford seeks referrals of young women and mothers with high levels of trauma and instability and who are the highest risk for negative systems involvement, including criminal justice and child welfare; disengaged from education and employment; have negative or non-existent social connections; and are involved in, impacted by, or instigating violence.

FIGURE 6: **RISK FACTORS UPON ENROLLMENT (N=100)**



The majority of young women served (77%) are young mothers, many of whom are involved with DCF and have lost custody of their children. While trying to regain custody of their children, young mothers are struggling with homelessness and intimate partner violence. They face an uphill battle to regain stability for themselves and their children.

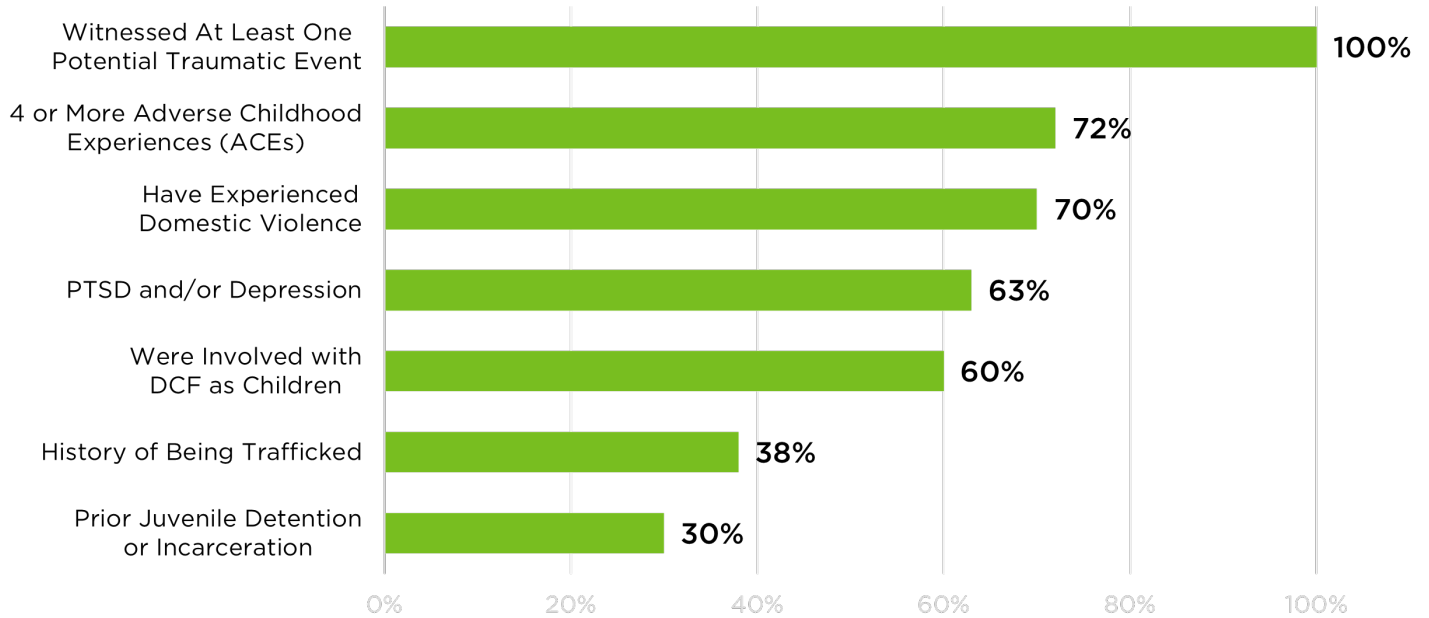
FIGURE 7: DCF INVOLVEMENT (N=80)¹



Roca uses assessment tools to identify young women’s dynamic and static risk factors. We gather information through intentional conversations with participants and from the community partners involved in their lives in order to determine their eligibility and enroll them in active slots. The questions we ask in our Central Intake and Baseline Change Assessment align with validated measurements, including but not limited to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs); Level of Distress Inventory; PTSD and Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9); and Relationship Interaction scales (HITS, CTS, JVCT). All 100 participants served during the past two years had a baseline change assessment.

¹ Data is for active participants as of the publication of this report in October 2023.

FIGURE 8: RISK FACTORS IDENTIFIED DURING BASELINE CHANGE ASSESSMENT (N=100)



SYSTEMS INVOLVEMENT

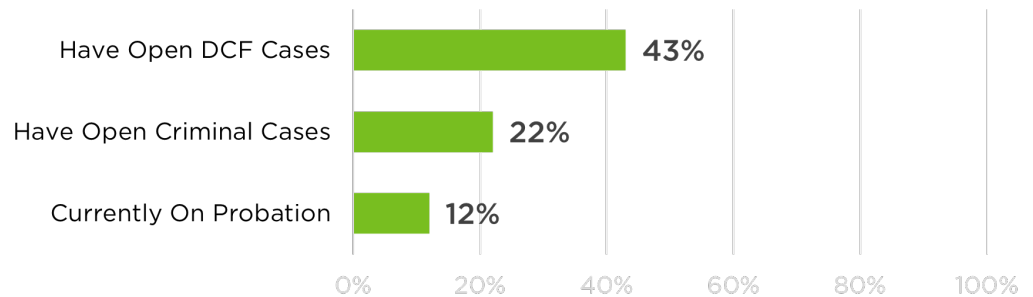
Roca’s young women are characterized by their complex trauma, relationship to violence, and a web of (mostly) involuntary multi-systems involvement. Involvement in multiple systems, notably the criminal, legal, child welfare, and immigration systems, further exposes young women to complex trauma and violence, and increases the likelihood that they will cycle in and out of jail, experience homelessness, and become separated from their children.

Our staff is in court on an almost daily basis to support women caught up in multiple systems.

FIGURE 9: MULTI-SYSTEM INVOLVEMENT (N=80)²

20
OPEN CASES IN
FAMILY COURT

22
OPEN CASES IN
CRIMINAL COURT



² Data is for active participants as of the publication of this report in October 2023.

Young mothers in particular face a number of barriers to meeting the requirements of Probation and DCF: lack of housing, childcare, and transportation; mental health challenges; and lack of availability of required programs/services. Given the difficult requirements and often competing demands posed by their involvement in multiple systems, **many young women are experiencing a range of complications that make it difficult if not impossible for them to meet specific conditions and/or expectations of the respective systems.** This further impacts their ability to heal from trauma and be the women and mothers they hope to be.

Roca provides intensive case management to support young women and mothers in navigating systems. This includes connecting young women to resources, benefits, and supports that they are eligible for but often have difficulty accessing, including Husky, WIC, SNAP, TFA (cash assistance), and childcare. Roca works to connect young women to these benefits (and other supportive services to meet their basic needs, such as shelter placements). But the eligibility criteria present challenges to a population that lacks physical and psychological safety and stability, and that requires more time, more chances, and more support in navigating these resources. For example, when participants can't apply for food stamps because they don't have an address, Roca not only helps with the application process but also allows participants to list Roca's address on the application.

Some of the most significant barriers and challenges are experienced by our young women who are mothers. For example, mothers are required to list their child's father's information in order to be approved for TFA—but they are often not informed that there is an exemption in cases of domestic violence. A young mother facing domestic violence may not feel she can apply for this support that she needs and is entitled to, for fear that providing information about her child's father could put her back in harm's way.

We have certainly met helpful staff working within systems, but on the whole we believe that systems need to have a greater understanding of these challenges. In addition, changes to administrative processes/practices could dramatically improve these young women's ability to meet requirements, make positive changes, and achieve stability for themselves and their children. For example, we are working with the City of Hartford on setting aside childcare slots for young mothers who are unable to work but are consistently engaging in programming with Roca. We are working with several partners—including Project Longevity, Interval House, the Hartford State's Attorney, Connecticut Children's Alliance, and Connecticut Coalition Against Domestic Violence—to improve housing options for young women and mothers who have experienced victimization.

Sometimes, the intersection of trafficking, young motherhood, and other traumatic experiences create situations too unique and complex for systems leaders to navigate, and we work together to find solutions.

Sam³ was referred to Roca by DCF in October 2021. She had just turned 18 and had been in DCF custody since age 12, when she gave birth to her son, having been sexually abused by her uncle for many years. Her son was placed with her aunt, and she was removed from her mother's custody, placed in group homes and foster care from which she constantly ran away.

When Roca began working with her, Sam was alternatively living with her boyfriend, where she experienced ongoing intimate partner violence, and her mother, who would take her bus passes and food stamps, resulting in physical altercations between the two. Sam was arrested several times for assault charges.

With Roca's support she obtained Husky, finally accessed medical care, and underwent surgery to address a serious, underlying health issue. She connected with a clinician to undergo a mental health evaluation, qualifying her for services through DMHAS including supportive housing. She obtained her basic documents and got a job.

When she got her first paycheck, she noticed a significant portion had been cut by the state for child support for the son she had when she was 12, for whom her parental rights had been terminated. Roca has been working with various agencies to address this significant barrier to her economic stability.

Housing continues to pose the greatest challenge to young women's safety and stability. Roca staff provides a significant amount of support in navigating 2-1-1, building and leveraging relationships to ensure young women have a safe place to sleep. Even when we can find shelter placements for young women, requirements such as needing to leave the shelter during the day sometimes put young women back on the streets and into unsafe situations.

Childcare presents the second biggest challenge. Roca's Intervention Model is designed to provide individualized opportunities for young women to access economic stability, reaching and serving young people who can't succeed in traditionally programs like education and job training. Unfortunately, participation in Roca is not sufficient for young women to obtain a childcare voucher or qualify for TFA, even if they are studying for their GED or in working in Roca's Transitional Employment Program. This often leads to young women rushing to find jobs that they cannot retain, and utilizing childcare arrangements that put their children at risk.

As Roca continues to work with young women and mothers, we are committed to building relationships with systems to discuss these barriers and identify potential solutions.

INVOLVEMENT IN COMMUNITY VIOLENCE

The young women Roca serves are involved in, impacted by, or instigating violence. They are victims of sexual assault, involved in trafficking or sex work, or experiencing repeated intimate partner violence. They are involved in street crimes like physical assaults and larceny (including auto theft); are affiliated with gangs; are victims or targets of gun violence; or have partners or family members who are perpetrators of violence. Sometimes, several of these are true.

³ Name has been changed to protect anonymity.

Earlier this year, a young woman (non-Roca participant) put three Roca participants in a vehicle with two older men in Hartford. The men brought the young women to Massachusetts, stopping multiple times in different locations, some of which were establishments (stores, businesses, hotels) suspected of involvement in trafficking activity.

As the men reached Cape Cod, the young women became fearful and called 911. The two men were arrested—as was one of the young women, a juvenile who had pending charges for auto theft with guns found in one of the cars. She is currently detained.

The young women we serve have trauma that is acute, complex, and chronic. Because of this, they are in survival mode—a constant state of fear. Many of them think that no one in their lives can or will truly keep them safe, so they have taken their survival into their own hands.

At least 50% of young women carry a weapon on them for daily protection (knife, taser, etc.), and we suspect that at least 25% have access to guns, through gang involvement and/or partners/family members who carry and/or are known perpetrators of violence. Whether or not they intend to actually use these weapons doesn't matter—just by carrying a weapon, they become more likely to be a victim or perpetrator of violence.

Their level of **acute-elevated risk** demands immediate and intentional work with them. Over the past two years, we have seen that:

- **Young women are directly impacted by gun violence.** Almost half of Roca Hartford's participants were directly impacted by gun violence over the past two years. Fifteen young women referred to the program were victims of non-fatal shootings, and five enrolled participants were injured by targeted street- and gun-violence. An additional 20 participants enrolled in the program had family members or partners who were shot—and in many instances killed—during the past year. A growing number of young women are being shot at, jumped, and targeted by gangs or traffickers.
- **Young women are increasingly involved in the criminal justice system.** 31% of Roca Hartford participants were arrested in the past two years, and 17% went to jail or juvenile detention. 16% have charges for repeat auto theft. 7% had felony charges for involvement in boosting rings, of which three spent time in federal facilities.
- **Young women's safety is at risk.** 64% of participants experienced at least one incident of intimate partner violence or sexual assault, and some multiple times, during the past two years. 14% are confirmed as current victims of sex trafficking, and some of these are also “recruiters” or “enforcers”, which is often critical to their survival.

Increased Internal Focus on Physical Safety

We cannot simply have protocols for their own sake; we must constantly review them and make appropriate changes. Over the past year, we have seen an increasing need to pay attention to safety and adjust our internal protocols. Our intake includes a risk assessment and safety profile, which we are updating against validated risk- and needs-assessment tools specific to women, and also to be inclusive of potential trafficking. Safety information is relayed and updated in real-time to ensure staff and participants stay safe during outreach and programming, both inside and outside the building. A safety list is continuously updated, indicating which participants are at the

highest risk.

In addition to the organization's updated Safety Manual, we developed a safety protocol specific to Hartford. Our goal is to create and maintain a safe space (emotionally and physically) for young women to engage in the change process. To protect against increasing violence and access to weapons, every participant is checked before entering Roca vehicles and the Roca building. For young women who are being actively targeted, we deliver programming outside the building, and staff is restricted from physical outreach when there may be a threat to their safety. The prevalence of trafficking has also prompted Roca staff to be very strategic when bringing participants together for classes and engagements, as it is quick and easy for young women to get drawn into each other's lives.

19-year-old Sienna⁴ was referred by DCF in June 2022. She moved to the United States from the Dominican Republic at age 10 with her mom, became pregnant by her stepfather at age 13, and was placed in group homes. She ran away, getting involved in and arrested for various street crimes.

Her now ex-boyfriend shot two high-school age youth during a home invasion, which Sienna was accused of helping to set up. She was arrested for conspiracy to commit murder, though the charges were subsequently dropped. Her boyfriend was incarcerated and Sienna lost custody of her son.

At first, she was afraid to trust Roca, until she started receiving threats—she was being targeted in retaliation for the shooting. With Roca's help, she was able to file a report with law enforcement and get support in moving to a safer area.

She eventually regained custody of her son, but was still afraid to leave the house and to take public transportation. She carried a knife even to bring her son to school. As a result, she was hesitant to work. She started using apps and making videos to make money, but once again she found herself being threatened. Finally, she started working in Roca's Transitional Employment Program, where she was able to work inside our building.

CREATING SAFETY AND STABILITY

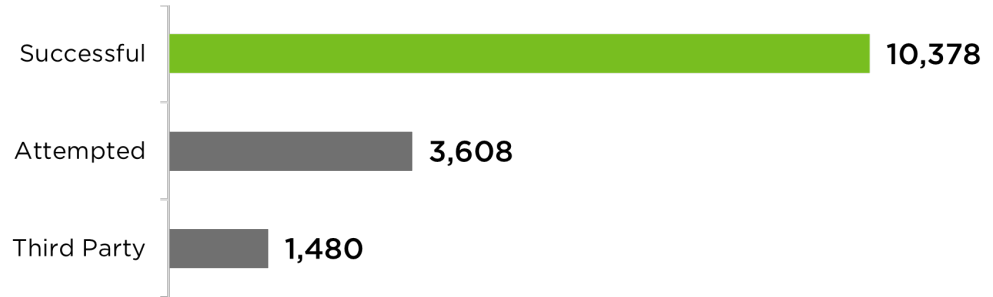
Young women can only make thoughtful decisions when they feel safe and do not have to focus on survival. Roca and our youth workers provide a safe physical and psychological space to help young women manage trauma symptoms and meet basic needs, so they can begin to benefit from the services Roca offers.

We invest years into building transformational relationships. These relationships form a crucial foundation upon which we can build the vulnerability, accountability, and honesty that young people need to heal their trauma and regain agency. However, it can take a long time and a lot of perseverance before young women agree to share this safe space with us. In our first 2 years, Roca Hartford Youth Workers made 15,466 outreach attempts, successfully contacting young women 67% of the time.

⁴ Name has been changed to protect anonymity.

FIGURE 10: **RELENTLESS CONTACT EFFORTS**⁵

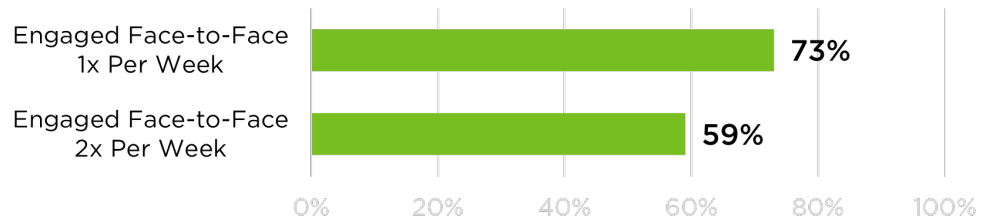
15,446
TOTAL EFFORTS
67%
SUCCESS RATE



Over the past two years, nearly all participants served (those on registered caseloads) were successfully contacted. Three out of four were successfully engaged in face-to-face contact at least once per week, and more than half were successfully engaged at least twice per week. This number steadily increased each quarter as staff became increasingly comfortable performing relentless outreach and built stronger, transformational relationships.

FIGURE 11: **SUCCESSFUL OUTREACH**

99%
SUCCESSFULLY
CONTACTED



TEACH LIFE-SAVING SKILLS

There are few times when the brain is able to actively and substantially change. One of those periods is between the ages of 16 to 24, a critical time of neuroplasticity where the brain is open to change and learning new behaviors. As such, our work is rooted in brain science and adolescent brain development research, using a non-clinical version of Cognitive Behavioral Theory (Rewire CBT) that helps young women change the unhelpful cycles of thoughts, feelings, and action that keep them stuck in survival mode.

Rewire CBT is simple, relatable, and fully mobile: it can be delivered in the community or in the building. Roca staff are given the tools to teach CBT skills, work through difficult situations with young people, and present real-time examples of how to use CBT—almost every conversation we have with a young person is grounded in Rewire CBT.

We have found that you cannot make a young person change by yelling at them, telling them about your past life in the streets, or paying them. You have to offer them the tools to actually change. **Rewire CBT helps young people break free from the impacts of trauma, slow down, breathe, and take an 8-12 second pause before a conflict ends in injury or death.**

⁵ Data is for October 1, 2021 – September 30, 2023

Rather than *telling* young people to stop carrying weapons or retaliating with violence, we ask them why they think they have to. Transformational relationships build a foundation of trust and emotional safety that allows us to have direct and intentional conversations about what is driving their behaviors. Before they can see that change is possible, young people need help understanding the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors they cycle through when they feel threatened.

As personally invested as we may become in the lives of our young people, **we are very careful not to make it about *what we want for them*. Instead, we support *what they tell us they want for themselves* and then relentlessly challenge them to *act in line with those values*.** If they tell us that being a good mother means being home every night for bedtime, then we must challenge their behaviors if we see on social media that they are at a party with friends at bedtime. They must be held accountable in a safe way that promotes positive behavior change.

Young people can develop agency and take control of their lives by increasing their ability to regulate their emotions. If they don't, they will not be successful in employment, housing, harm reduction, or their relationships; they will not be the parents they want to be for their children. Rewire CBT helps them develop this crucial skill.

Young women and mothers most commonly use CBT to:

1. **Recognize and respond differently to conflicts with friends, family members, and partners.**
2. **Navigate DCF involvement for their children.**

Jessica⁶ is a young mother with a three-year-old son in DCF custody. She is heavily gang-involved; connected to several incidences of gun violence through partners who are perpetrators of violence; and is herself often targeted. She has been arrested several times for physical altercations and has experienced repeated intimate partner violence.

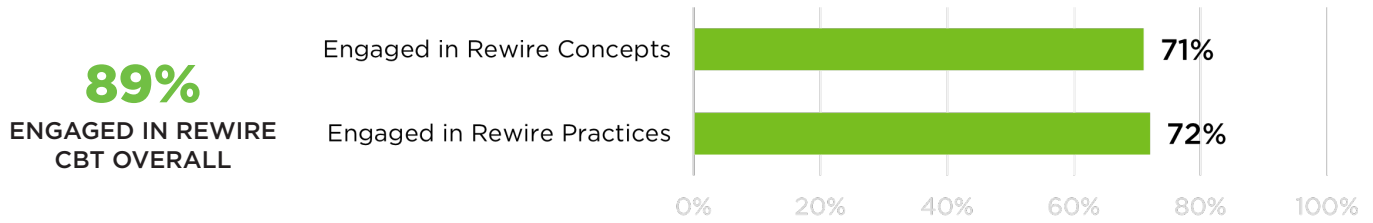
After being referred to Roca by DCF, Jessica was able to have supervised visits with her son in the building. Jessica's family members, partners, and rivals often reported on her to DCF, and DCF would believe them. Initially, she would get angry with DCF, swear at and threaten her DCF worker—she once even threatened her DCF worker physically, resulting in her not being able to see her son.

By practicing CBT, she was able to begin to regulate her emotions and improve her communication with DCF. According to Jessica, "Roca has helped me because when I was first enrolled in the program, I was very explosive. I did not care for the help. I have learned some CBT skills that can help me label my feelings when I am having a really rough time."

We cannot underscore enough the importance of CBT in helping young mothers improve their parenting skills and decision-making. Roca uses Power Source Parenting—a curriculum that is DCF-approved, designed for adolescent parents, and grounded in CBT—to teach parenting skills in a way that young people can relate to and subsequently practice.

⁶ Name has been changed to protect anonymity.

FIGURE 12: **REWIRE CBT ENGAGEMENT (N = 100)**⁷



PRACTICE SKILLS, RELAPSE, AND REPEAT

At Roca we create an opportunity for young people to safely engage in employment, education, parenting, harm reduction and life skills programming—all through a CBT lens. We show them how their thoughts, feelings, and actions are separate, but can impact one another at work, home, and when they’re with their peers. We help young people identify and address their trauma **safely**, while understanding that relapse is a critical part of the change process. We don’t wait for young people to be “ready”; instead we engage them in stage-based programming where every step is designed as a learning experience.

Our stage-based programming is designed for young people who are not yet ready to fully engage, so each component starts with drop-in programming and grows to more traditional certifications. This allows participants to take the time they need to develop behaviors that will help them succeed in traditional educational or employment programming and/or jobs.

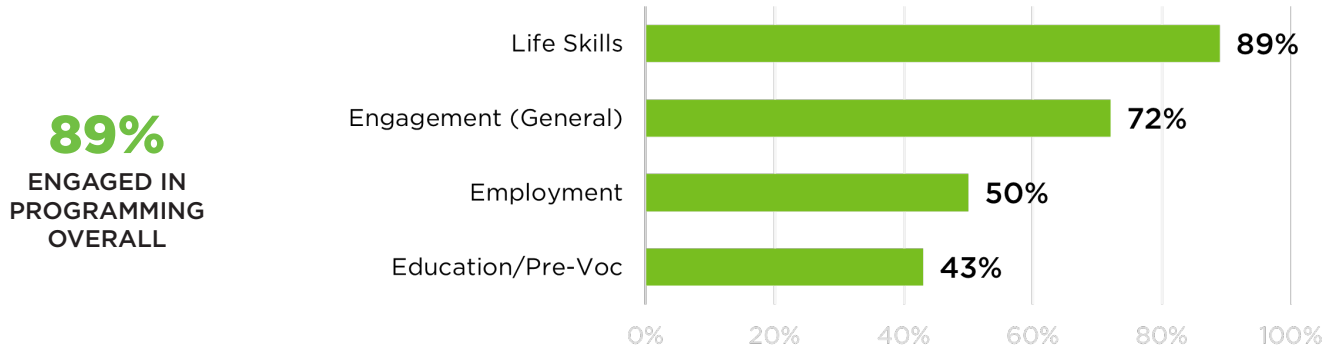
Roca recognizes that not all young women are ready to come into the building for programming. It is important to note that many of our participants enter Roca with such a negative experience of the classroom setting that they often try to avoid programming. Therefore, Educators and Youth Workers are trained and able to provide programming wherever a participant is most comfortable.

Program offerings include education (GED, school support, credit recovery, adult basic education, digital literacy, and ESL); employment (workforce readiness, pre-vocational certifications, digital literacy, financial literacy, and Driver’s Permit/License preparation); and life skills programming (CBT, Healthy Habits/harm reduction, Peacemaking Circles, and special engagements).

During the past two years, 19 out of 26 participants who were in high school when referred remained enrolled in school. Eight participants graduated from high school, and 7 are working on their GED.

⁷ Data is for October 1, 2021 – September 30, 2023

FIGURE 13: PROGRAMMING ENGAGEMENT DURING INTENSIVE SERVICES (N = 100)⁸



PARTNERSHIPS

Our Work with Partners

It would be both inaccurate and dangerous to think that Roca—or any Community Violence Intervention (CVI) program—could work in isolation with young people at the center of violence. It is critical that we collaborate with key partners—not only to maintain safety, but to quickly mitigate risk and effectively reach out to and engage young women. In Hartford, we are working to operationalize our work with partners across all the systems that touch our young women. Over the past two years we have:

- Increased coordination with the City of Hartford, the State’s Attorney for the Judicial District of Hartford, and the Hartford Police Department to ensure the safety of young women who have been shot or shot at.
- Actively participated in the Regional Human Trafficking Recovery Taskforce convened by the State’s Attorney and Connecticut Children’s Alliance to identify and address trafficking.
- Collaborated with Interval House to address the immediate safety of young women impacted by Intimate Partner Violence.
- Partnered with the City of Hartford and the CT Office of Early Childhood to reduce barriers to childcare access for young mothers experiencing instability and violence, who are disengaged from school and work but actively engaging with Roca.
- Continued conversations with York Correctional Institution to formalize an MOU to work with young women from Roca who are incarcerated and provide groups to young women behind the wall.

As Roca establishes a stronger presence in Connecticut, we look forward to deepening our engagement with partners and systems. Already we are making contributions:

- In September 2023, **the Roca Impact Institute provided its Rewire4 training to a cohort of officers in Hartford.** Rewire4 is an adapted version of Roca’s CBT curriculum, tailored for

⁸ Data is for October 1, 2021 – September 30, 2023

the practices of policing and corrections. Officers learn the theory and skills to stay focused, read themselves, examine their thinking, and act on what’s important to them. To date, the Roca Impact Institute has trained over 2,700 law enforcement personnel across 19 agencies in 3 states. It was a privilege to provide this training in Hartford, and we look forward to continuing to support law enforcement in Hartford and across the state.

- In September 2023, **Roca was invited by the Tow Center for Youth Justice to participate in a newly formed Gender-Responsive Workgroup of the Juvenile Justice Policy Oversight Committee.** We look forward to conducting a comprehensive landscape analysis of gender-responsive services for young women with criminal involvement alongside representatives from relevant systems, and developing recommendations together. In 2019, Roca conducted a similar effort for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Health & Human Services, using research, a review of data, and interviews with young women and community partners to develop a report on young women’s involvement in violence.

Partnering to Disrupt Human Trafficking

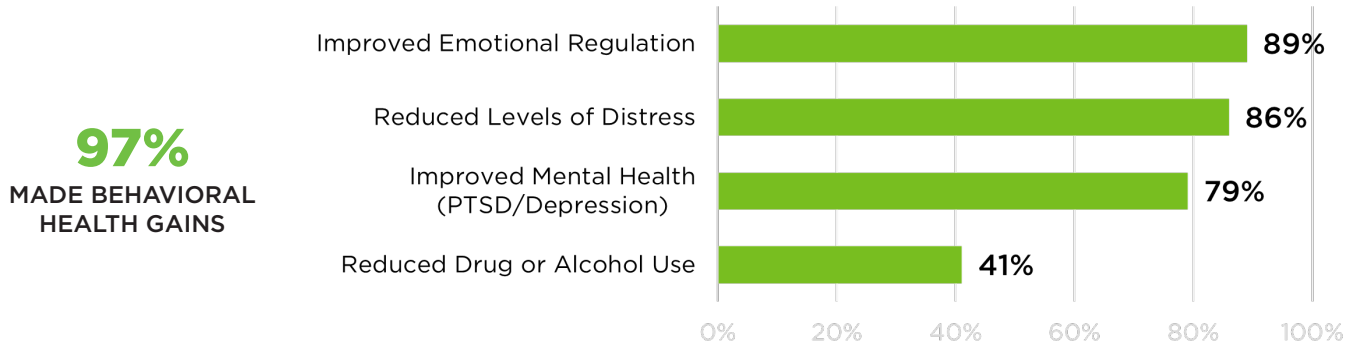
We cannot overstate the importance of these partnerships, especially in addressing the prevalence of trafficking, which compromises the immediate safety of our young women. We have begun to map out the interrelations between young women and their traffickers, gaining a deeper understanding of their various roles—victim, enforcer, recruiter—and finding connections between trafficking and much of the gang- and gun-violence and auto theft taking place in and around Hartford.

During the past year, it was brought to our attention that seven young women had stayed for varying periods of time in a house in a town approximately 20 miles northeast of Hartford. These young women shared information about their relationships and activities in the house that raised significant red flags. Thanks to key partners who listened to our concerns, the house was raided, and many residents were arrested. In addition to sex trafficking, young women were being coerced into other illegal activities in order to keep what they perceived as safe, stable housing and love.

INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

It takes 18–24 months to see changes in participants’ emotional regulation, and subsequently their behaviors. Twenty-eight participants are at or near the 18 month mark and have completed a recent Change Assessment (baseline Change Assessments are administered upon eligibility, and every six months thereafter). Of these, nearly all demonstrated cognitive/behavioral gains. While relapse is part of Roca’s model and the change process is not linear, these early signs of progress give us hope that change is possible for our young women in Hartford.

FIGURE 13: **INTERMEDIATE COGNITIVE-BEHAVIORAL OUTCOMES (N=28)**



Over the next year, we will be able to report on longer-term outcomes that we expect to see after 24 months, including reduced recidivism and child welfare system involvement, as well as employment placement and retention. We are also working with our external evaluators to identify key outcomes for women experiencing violence and victimization.

PERFORMANCE-BASED MANAGEMENT & EVALUATION

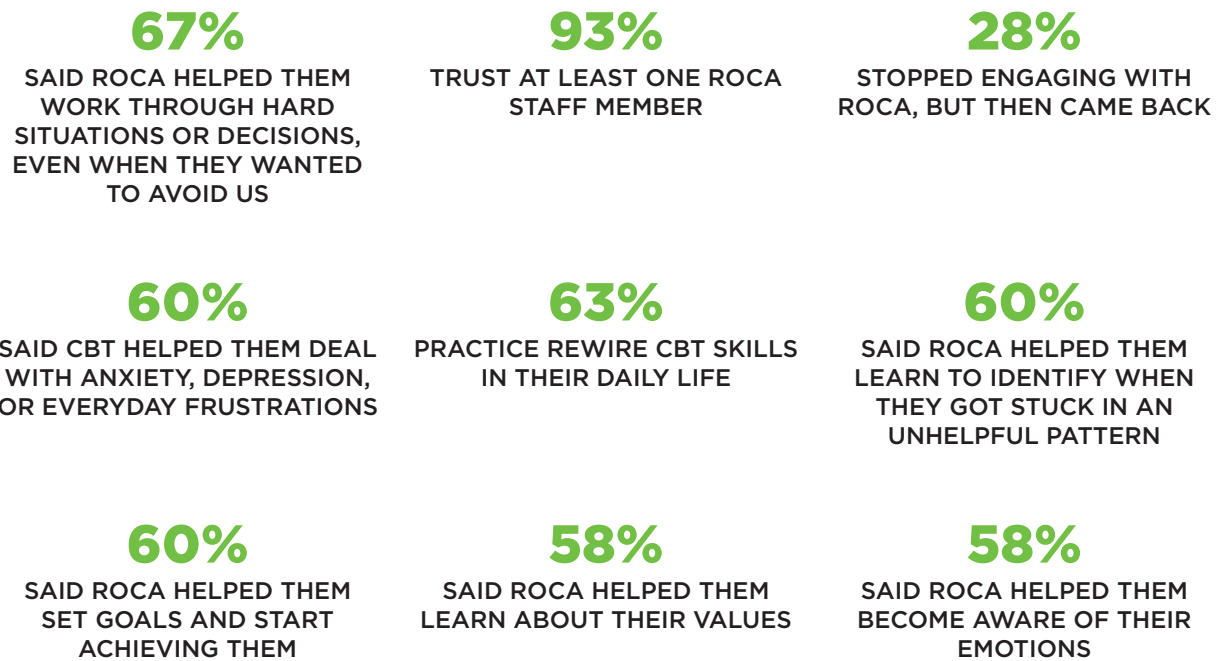
Participant Feedback

Participant feedback is critical to Roca’s commitment to continuous improvement. A participant feedback survey is administered annually and reviewed/ revised by a cross-organizational team that reflects on the previous year’s results, determines what we want to know from participants, and pilots the survey with a small group of participants prior to administration. The objectives are to determine:

- What services have helped participants re-engage or develop meaningful skills?
- Are participants practicing CBT skills throughout their daily lives?
- Do participants feel safe at Roca and have trusting relationships?
- What existing services can be enhanced and what additional services can be offered?

The 2023 Participant Feedback Survey was administered in January and inclusive of Roca Hartford. Forty-three Roca Hartford participants (62% of enrolled participants at the time of administration) completed the survey, including equal numbers of those enrolled less than one year and more than one year.

FIGURE 14: **RESPONSE HIGHLIGHTS**



Participants were also invited to participate in a focus group. When asked what trust looks or feels like at Roca, they expressed confidentiality and feeling comfortable; calm demeanor and ability to de-escalate even with young person lashes out; feeling like staff are non-judgmental; a positive and safe environment; staff being there for them in difficult times even after they tested staff members' loyalty; and feeling like Roca changed their mindset, reminding them that there are good people out there.

Overwhelmingly, participants expressed wanting more assistance with housing.

External Evaluation

In March of 2022, Tufts Interdisciplinary Evaluation Research (TIER) began a three-year implementation and outcomes evaluation of Roca's work with young women and mothers. Since beginning the evaluation, TIER conducted the first round of focus groups with staff and participants. They also worked on updating participant consent forms and data sharing agreements with state agencies, including DOE, DCF, DSS, OEC, and CSSD.

Over the coming year, TIER will work on improving Roca's eligibility and enrollment packet. They will update the Change Assessment based on a refined understanding of Roca's target population and a refined definition of risk, cross-walking current assessments against validated, gender-responsive tools including the Women's Risk and Needs Assessment (WRNA). They are also currently analyzing internal data to assess implementation and identify key outcomes, including a rapid-cycle evaluation to determine the appropriate length of Roca's Intervention Model for young women. Finally, TIER completed a White Paper titled How Roca's Young Mothers Program Supports Transformation, which highlighted the defining characteristics of the population of young women Roca serves, and the key programmatic components contributing to positive outcomes.