

# Promise Neighborhood **Site PROFILE**

## Chula Vista Promise Neighborhood

### GRANTEE ORGANIZATION:

South Bay Community Services

### LOCATION:

Chula Vista, CA

### FEDERAL PROMISE NEIGHBORHOOD GRANT:

*Date of grant award:*  
December 2012

*Date grant agreement with U.S. Department of Education executed:*  
January 2013

*Total investment:*  
\$61 million (\$27.8 million federal grant and \$33 million in matching funds) over five years

### COMMUNITY CONTEXT/TARGET POPULATION

Chula Vista Promise Neighborhood (CVPromise) serves the neighborhood of Castle Park, a 33-census block area in the city of Chula Vista. In collaboration with the Chula Vista Elementary School District leadership, the border of the CVPromise catchment area was drawn along the lines of the attendance zone for Castle Park Elementary, one of the lowest-performing schools in the area and in program improvement status under No Child Left Behind for several years.

The rates of poverty, unemployment, female-headed households, and food stamp use in the Castle Park community are significantly higher than in San Diego County or the state of California.<sup>1</sup> Only one-third of adults in the community graduated high school, and fewer than 40 percent of children attend prekindergarten. About 70 percent of the residents are Latino, and nearly 50 percent of students are English language learners (ELL).

There are 6,700 residents in the neighborhood, including more than 1,800 children. By the fifth year of the grant, CVPromise plans to serve all children residing in the neighborhood and all students who attend one of the partner schools, for a total of more than 2,800 children.

### KEY PARTNERS AND THEIR ROLES

South Bay Community Services (SBCS), the lead CVPromise agency, has a long history of providing a comprehensive spectrum of services—from housing assistance to child abuse prevention and intervention to school reform—for children and families in South San Diego County. The initiative partners with Castle Park Elementary and the two middle and two high schools it feeds into. These schools are in Chula Vista's two school districts, one for the elementary schools and the other for the middle and high schools.

During the planning stage, SBCS brought together more than 25 partners in addition to the schools, including city and county departments, nonprofit service providers, hospitals, institutions of higher education, businesses, and parent and resident groups, to build their continuum of cradle-to-college solutions (see sidebar, page 2). CVPromise partners signed on to provide a 100 percent financial or in-kind match for a total investment of more than \$60 million to support CVPromise.

CVPromise partners provide services in all areas of the initiative including early childhood, student enrichment, college and career readiness, workforce development, family support, and neighborhood revitalization. For example, CVPromise's early development services are enhanced through partnerships with Family Health Centers of San Diego and Scripps Medical Center, which offer newborn home visiting. Additional partners provide family support services, including the San Diego Health and Human Services Agency, which provides benefit eligibility screenings and application assistance for CVPromise families, and two social workers to assist neighborhood children and families involved in the child welfare system. The initiative's data partner is San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG), which collects and analyzes the data required for grant reporting.

### THE PROMISE NEIGHBORHOOD INITIATIVE

Since receiving the Promise Neighborhoods grant, SBCS has added nearly 100 staff to intensify and enrich the existing services available to the neighborhood and to implement the Turnaround Model (formerly the Granger Turnaround Model) in their partner schools.<sup>2</sup> Major components of CVPromise are represented in Figure 1.

## Chula Vista Promise Neighborhood Key Partners



### Early Childhood

Family Health Centers of San Diego  
 First 5 Commission of San Diego  
 Scripps Medical Center, Chula Vista  
 YMCA Childcare Resource Service  
 American Academy of Pediatrics



### Schools

Chula Vista Elementary School District  
 Castle Park Elementary School  
 Sweetwater Union High School District  
 Castle Park Middle School  
 Castle Park High School  
 Hilltop Middle School  
 Hilltop High School



### Enrichment

A Reason to Survive (ARTS)  
 San Diego Youth Symphony  
 South Bay YMCA  
 The Living Coast

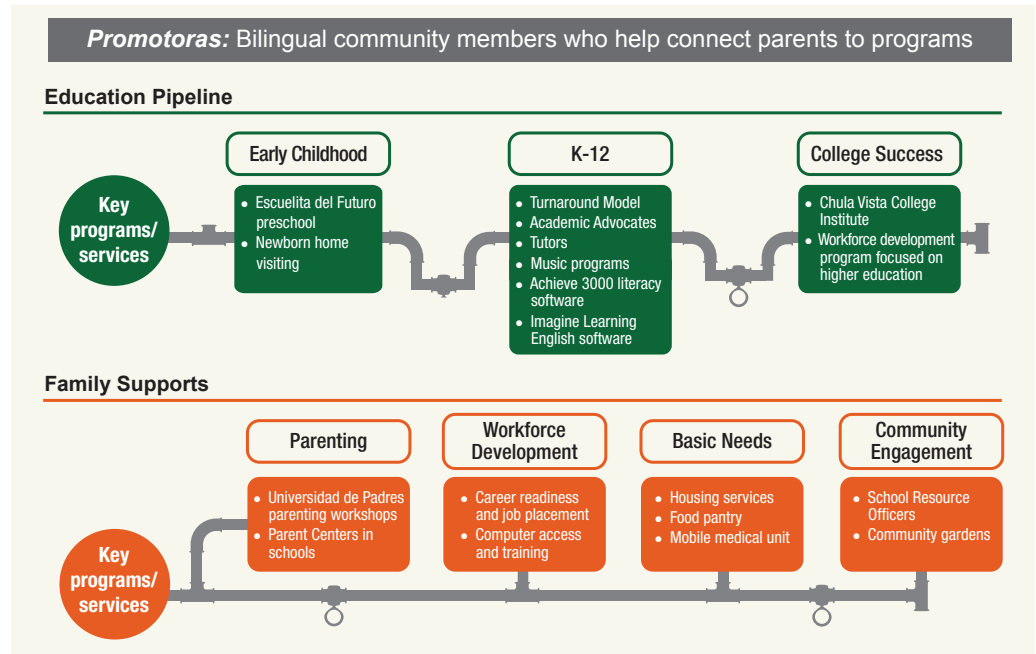


### College and Career Readiness

Barrio Logan College Institute (BLCI)  
 University of California, San Diego (UCSD)  
 Southwestern College

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**Figure 1.** Chula Vista Promise Neighborhood Pipeline Components



Source: Site visit interviews conducted in 2014.

Note: This figure highlights key activities in each area; it does not list all the programs and services the Promise Neighborhood offers.

- Programs.** CVPromise leadership stated that the Early Learning Network (ELN), which serves families and children from birth through elementary school, is the most important component of the initiative because early learning serves as the foundation for all future growth and development. The ELN provides programs such as newborn home visiting and Escuelita del Futuro, a preschool for children ages 3–5.

One of the most emphasized educational programs offered through CVPromise is the Turnaround Model, which is implemented in all partner elementary and middle schools. The Turnaround Model involves frequent assessments, with re-teaching and re-testing for students who score below 70 percent, and mandatory after-school and weekend sessions for students who miss homework assignments or are frequently absent. In addition to the Turnaround Model, the CVPromise initiative also provides computer-based literacy programs including Achieve 3000, a differentiated instruction instrument that assigns students nonfiction articles to read and analyze; and Imagine Learning, a literacy curriculum geared toward ELL students. Additional K–12 supports include tutoring, bullying prevention programs, arts, music, and wellness programs.

CVPromise initiates the college preparation process early through its Chula Vista College Institute, which begins fostering a college-going culture for future first-generation college students in the third grade through college preparatory workshops, academic counseling for students and parents, tutoring and homework support, and field trips. This program will eventually expand to the middle and high schools. Academic Advocates stationed on the middle and high school campuses provide mentoring and college advising. One of the initiative’s partners, Manpower, provides a three-week workforce development after-school program for students in grades 11 and 12 that emphasizes higher education and career exploration.

- Families.** CVPromise implements many services to support families and integrate them into students’ academic careers. Universidad de Padres is a 12-session workshop for parents and caregivers of children from birth to age 3 years. In addition to the parenting support provided in children’s first years, families receive financial literacy, workforce, and nutritional training. For example, CVPromise partner Manpower offers a three-week workforce development program for adults at a partner middle school that focuses on career readiness and job placement. Another partner,

**Chula Vista Promise Neighborhood Key Partners**  
(continued)

**Workforce Development**

Manpower  
San Diego Futures Foundation

**Family Support**

Chula Vista Community Collaborative  
County of San Diego, Health and Human Services Agency  
San Diego Food Bank  
Feeding America

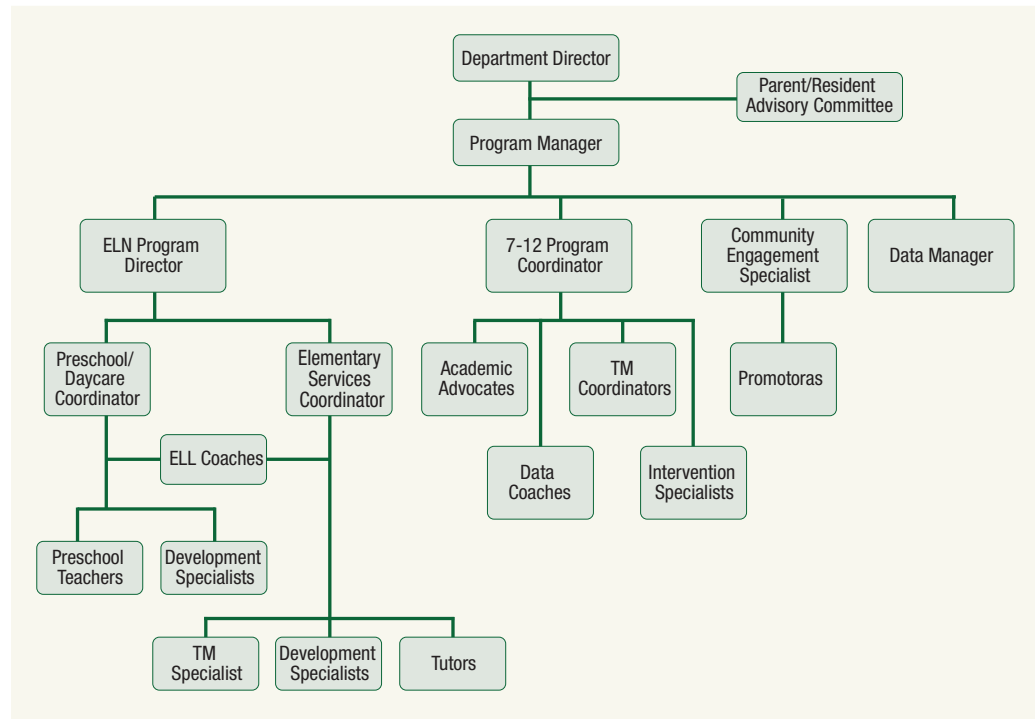
**Neighborhood Revitalization**

City of Chula Vista  
San Diego Organizing Project  
Chula Vista Police Department  
United Way of San Diego  
Wells Fargo  
Lowell Blankfort  
STAR News  
Sea World Aquatica  
The Parker Foundation  
San Diego Padres  
La Prensa

**Data System and Evaluation**

SANDAG

**Figure 2.** Chula Vista Promise Neighborhood Organizational Structure



Source: Background Documents from Chula Vista Promise Neighborhood.  
ELL=English language learner; ELN=Early Learning Network; TM=Turnaround Model.

the San Diego Futures Foundation, provides technology support to help participants learn basic computer skills and complete online job applications. Families can also take advantage of affordable housing support, tax preparation assistance, and the mobile medical unit, which offers free primary health care services to Castle Park children.

CVPromise has also initiated specific neighborhood revitalization efforts. For example, the initiative partnered with KaBOOM (a nonprofit that encourages active play for children) to design a dream playground for a local park, which was constructed by more than 200 volunteers. Additionally, the Ojos en la Calle (Eyes on the Street) program works with community volunteers to provide a safe environment for students to walk to and from school, a concern that parents raised at the start of the initiative.

The Parent/Resident Advisory Committee, comprising parents and community members, meets monthly to discuss implementation and advise CVPromise leadership on the community’s needs. It discusses various issues impacting the community such as those related to education and health, and offers suggestions to address the community’s needs.

Chula Vista employs more than a dozen dedicated outreach and engagement staff, called Promotoras, to assess families’ needs and make referrals to other lead agency or partner staff. Chula Vista recruits these bilingual staff from within the community, to the extent possible, so that their backgrounds are similar to those of the population. Promotoras are stationed at each school’s parent center.

**ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE AND STAFF ROLES**

The SBCS Director of Youth and Family Development manages all SBCS youth programming, including CVPromise. The Program Manager oversees the directors of the initiative’s pipeline component areas: early learning, middle and high school services, and community engagement (Figure 2). SBCS expanded its staff by almost 100 people, and these staff provide a large portion of the Promise Neighborhood programming. CVPromise frontline staff include preschool teachers, ELN Development Specialists, Turnaround Model Specialists, ELL Coaches, tutors, Academic Advocates, Instructional Specialists, and Promotoras.

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The community also plays a key role in the initiative, providing guidance, staff, and volunteers. Ninety percent of CVPromise staff have been recruited from the community, and the initiative has enlisted almost 700 community and parent volunteers to support their efforts.

## PROGRESS/ ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- **Community engagement.** Several interviewees commented on increased parent and community participation and engagement. In 2013, more than 1,500 residents were enrolled in CVPromise programs.<sup>3</sup> The elementary school has a Parent Teacher Association for the first time in five years. The Parent/Resident Advisory Committee meets monthly to strategize ways to meet the community's needs. The number of community volunteers increased from 19 to 682 between January and December 2013. Volunteers have been involved in activities such as helping build a community garden and playground. One community resident commented, "Now I do [feel part of the community], but before I didn't feel that way. The information wasn't there and I didn't feel like a part of the community. [Now] we go to meetings and classes together, so we socialize more."
- **Promising early outcomes of some programs** (based on data from a neighborhood survey reported in CVPromise 2013 and 2014 annual progress reports).
  - › The percentage of children birth to age 5 attending center-based and home-based care (Government Performance and Results Act [GPRA] indicator 3) increased from 43 percent in 2012 to 59 percent in 2013. The opening of CVPromise's Escuelita del Futuro contributed to this outcome. The center was fully enrolled upon opening with a waiting list of 50 children. A second classroom was added to help accommodate the community's interest.
  - › The percentage of parents of children birth to kindergarten who reported that they read to their children three or more times per week (GPRA indicator 12) increased from 53 percent in 2012 to 68 percent in 2013. CVPromise leadership attributes this improvement to its ELN programming such as the Universidad de Padres, which devotes one of its workshop sessions to family literacy, and the book clubs ELL Coaches initiated in Escuelita del Futuro classrooms.

## CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

- **Engaging parents in the continuum of services.** Engaging parents and children in multiple programs within the pipeline has been challenging because work, busy schedules, and competing priorities prevent families from accessing the full complement of CVPromise services. Families are too overwhelmed to manage the logistics of juggling multiple programs. To help families connect to various components of the pipeline, CVPromise started designating a point person for each family to help respond to their needs and make it easier for families to access services.
- **Collaborating with partners.** Staff, leadership, and partners reported that establishing effective partnerships is challenging. Successful collaboration requires aligning priorities and combining resources, which can be a difficult task for independent organizations. One lead agency representative commented that appealing to the need to work together for the benefit of the community helped facilitate the CVPromise collaboration.
- **Supporting staff and partners.** Lead agency frontline staff and partners noted the need for more clearly defined staff and partner roles and responsibilities and for better communication about CVPromise activities. The first year of implementation was a learning process as all the players learned to negotiate their new roles. One lead agency respondent noted, "They knew what they wanted to accomplish, but not how to do it. There were no handbooks or job descriptions. There was a lot to figure out." A partner representative reported that it has been challenging to maintain connections between CVPromise programs due to the large number of organizations involved. The respondent commented that additional communication from the lead agency regarding CVPromise activities would facilitate connections between partners. One Promotora suggested slowing the pace of implementation in the beginning to allow time to build the necessary infrastructure before initiating programs and services.

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## ABOUT PROMISE NEIGHBORHOODS CASE STUDIES

The Promise Neighborhoods Institute at Policy Link (PNI) contracted with Mathematica Policy Research to conduct in-depth case studies of five selected Promise Neighborhoods, including Chula Vista. For these case studies, Mathematica gathered and analyzed data from documents, telephone interviews, and three-to-four-day site visits to each selected Promise Neighborhood at the end of the 2013-2014 school year.

## LOOKING FORWARD

- **Initiative enhancements.** CVPromise leadership regularly assesses service needs and adds programs and services as opportunities arise. For example, CVPromise recently added mammogram screening and a new summer camp to the initiative's offerings.
- **Sustainability planning.** Staff, leadership, and partners all expressed interest in continuing their efforts, with or without federal funding. The monetary and in-kind matches SBCS solicited from all its partners will facilitate continued operation of CVPromise services, particularly because start-up costs are higher than the costs associated with ongoing operations. CVPromise is working with partners to institutionalize their initiative offerings within their organizations. Many partners have already committed to continuing their programs. The San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency, for instance, plans to maintain staff on the Castle Park Middle School campus after the grant funding ends. At the same time, CVPromise is working with PNI to secure diverse sources of funding to help ensure the sustainability of all components of the initiative.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Chula Vista Promise Neighborhood implementation grant application, July 2012.

<sup>2</sup> SBCS and Sweetwater Union High School District developed the model to turn around two persistently low-performing schools. Since implementing the model, both schools have exited program improvement status, and their Academic Performance Index scores and attendance rates have increased.

<sup>3</sup> Chula Vista Promise Neighborhood, *Results Report 2013*, available at <http://www.cvpromise.org/images/Resultsreport2013web.pdf>.

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## Suggested Citation

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