



Exclusive Spaces:

Managing Inherent Risks to Traveling as a Visibly Marginalized Group

Overview of Today

- **Today we will aim to:**

- Share background on City Kids and the make-up of our staff and participants.
- Share insight into and practices related to the experiences of City Kids youth, staff, and the organization while traveling in outdoor spaces as a racial minority.
- Provide a framework for “Inclusion Risk Management” that could be adaptable to your programs.

- **Today we will not:**

- Focus on making the outdoors more inclusive – this presentation is about managing programs.
- Focus on other marginalized groups in the outdoors – this presentation focuses on programs serving predominately black & brown youth of color.

City Kids provides DC youth with life changing opportunities

OUR MISSION:

City Kids Wilderness Project is a non-profit organization founded on the belief that providing enriching life experiences for DC children can enhance their lives, the lives of their families, and the greater community

OUR MODEL:

Our program is based around three core principles: long-term youth engagement, outdoor adventure and experiential education programming, and goal setting with a focus on future planning. Youth develop a positive self-identity by overcoming challenges, building strong relationships with peers and adult mentors, and exploring personal possibilities



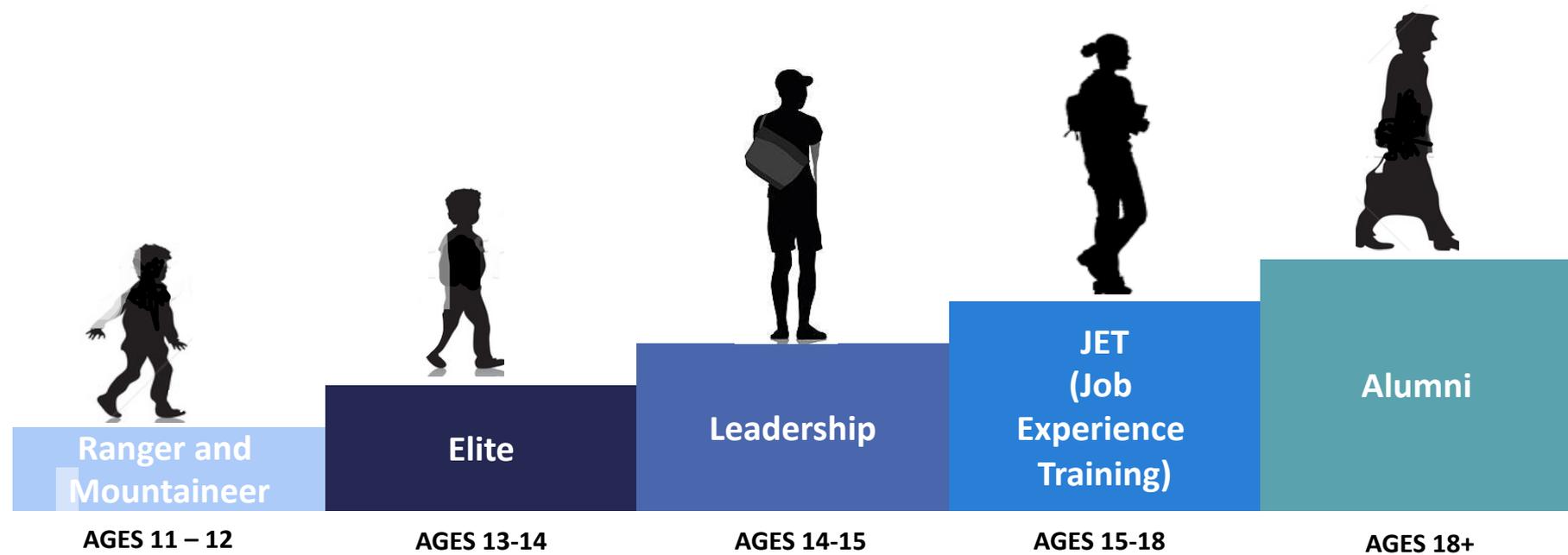
OUR YOUTH:

Our youth have an aptitude and confidence to lead and try new things and build a community around them.

- *63% of our youth are from DC's Wards 5, 7, and 8 – DC's most underinvested communities that typically provide fewer resources than more affluent communities*
- *87% are eligible for free or reduced school lunch*

CITYKIDS

We bring in 20 new 6th grade students to the City Kids family annually



Participants learn outdoor skills and try new things at summer camp, and during the school year through our afterschool and weekend outdoor adventure programming

Participants tackle physical challenges in the wilderness including:

- *Backpacking in the Sawtooth Mountains and kayaking in Yellowstone and the Tetons*
- *Weekend outdoor adventures*
- *Week-long kayak trip in the rivers, swamps and ocean of South Carolina*

Participants test their mastery of outdoor skills through high adventure activities and demonstrate newfound leadership skills by exploring issues within their communities

Year-round training opportunities lay the foundation for transferable job skills and future focused planning provides youth with a clear road map after high school. JETS are also offered paid professional experiences

Alumni receive regular check-ins and support for at least two years

- *1:1 mentorship and career planning support*
- *Post-secondary planning*
- *Alumni outdoor adventures and networking gatherings*
- *Volunteer engagement and job opportunities with City Kids programs*



Our philosophy to go deep vs. broad distinguishes us from other youth development organizations

1

Positive Peer Cohort Model

- Youth grow up in the program together, learning to support and rely on each other
- Youth share that City Kids is a positive outlet and peer group

2

Connections with caring adult and JET mentors

- Staff are paired with youth cohorts for consistency & relationship building
- High School youth serve as peer mentors for younger youth

3

Partnership with parents based on trust

- Regular communication, parent meetings, family programming
- Connect youth and families to resources / serve as advocates

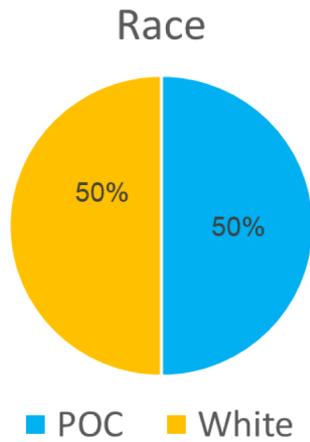
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Long term model with focus on goal setting

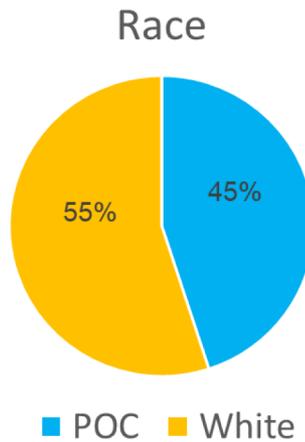
- 7 year program builds skills progressively from year to year
- Program evolves to meet needs of youth where they are

City Kids is proud of its participant and staff demographics

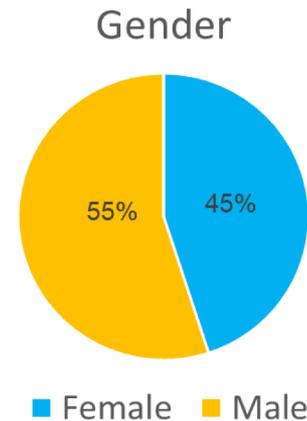
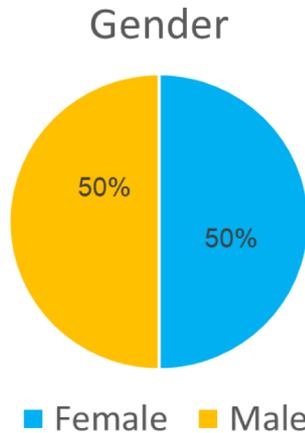
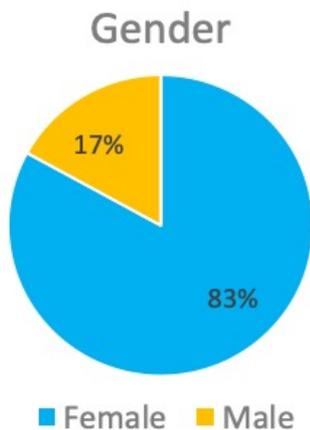
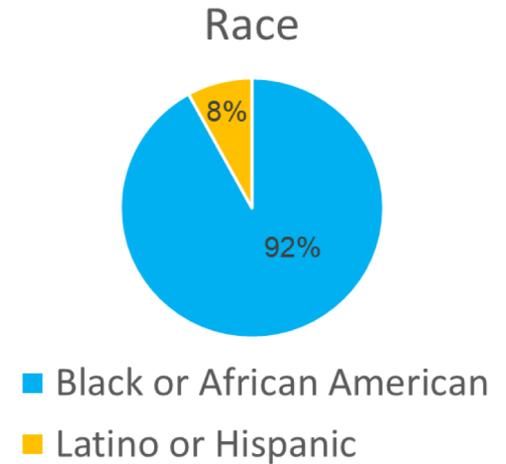
FULLTIME STAFF (2018)



SEASONAL STAFF (2018)



PARTICIPANTS (2018)



So what do we mean by “Exclusive Spaces?”

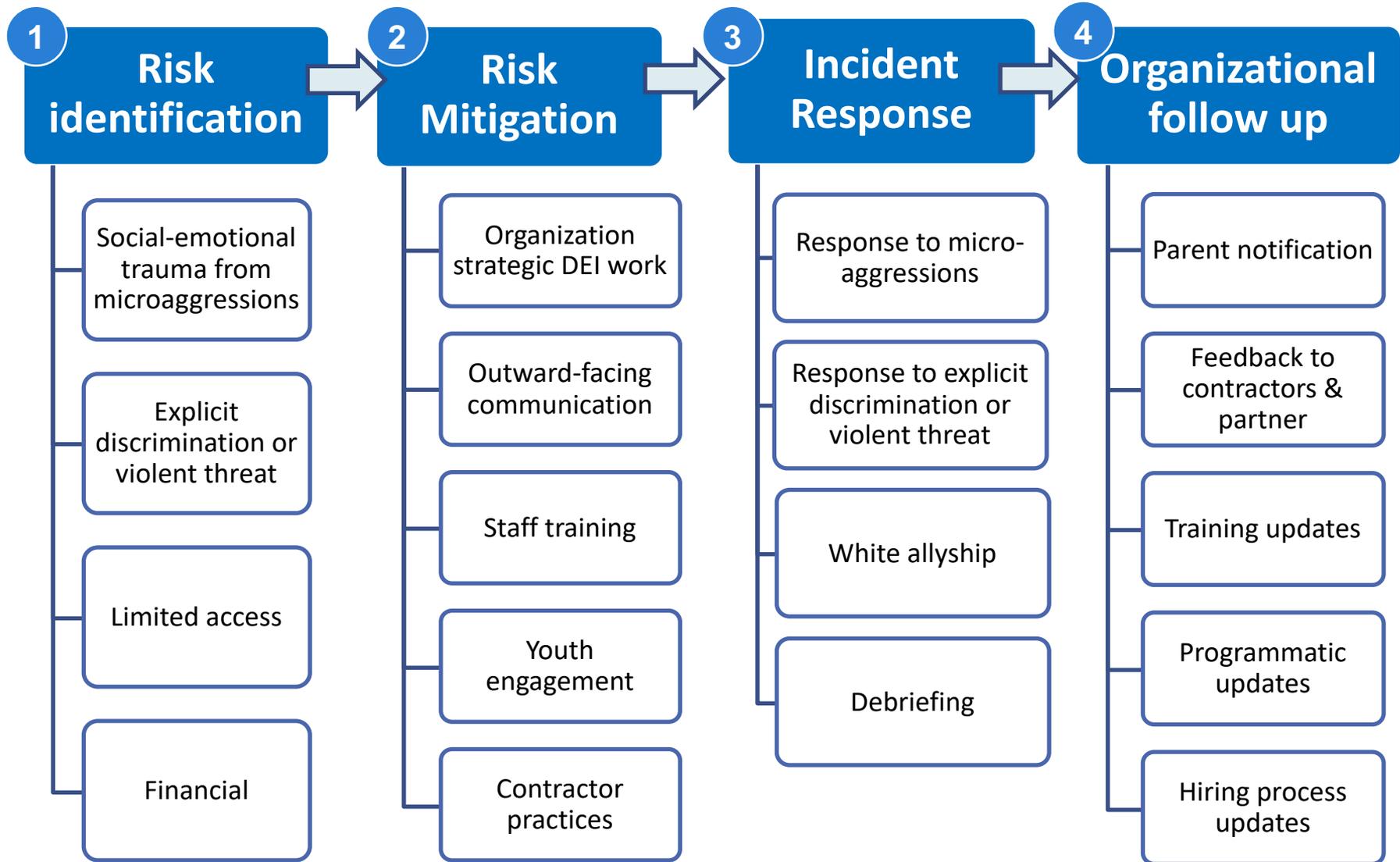
Our programming for DC youth spans across seven local, state, and national parks in Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Wyoming, and Idaho.

- **What do we mean by an exclusive space?**
 - Historically occupied by indigenous peoples, later colonized by white settlers*
 - Segregation played a large role in the design of our public lands*
 - Current convenings like the People of the Global Majority Summit (PGM One) and organizations like Outdoor Afro and Latino Outdoors are designed to make people of all racial and ethnic identities feel not only that they belong, but that they have the power to lead the vision for the future of our environment and outdoors.

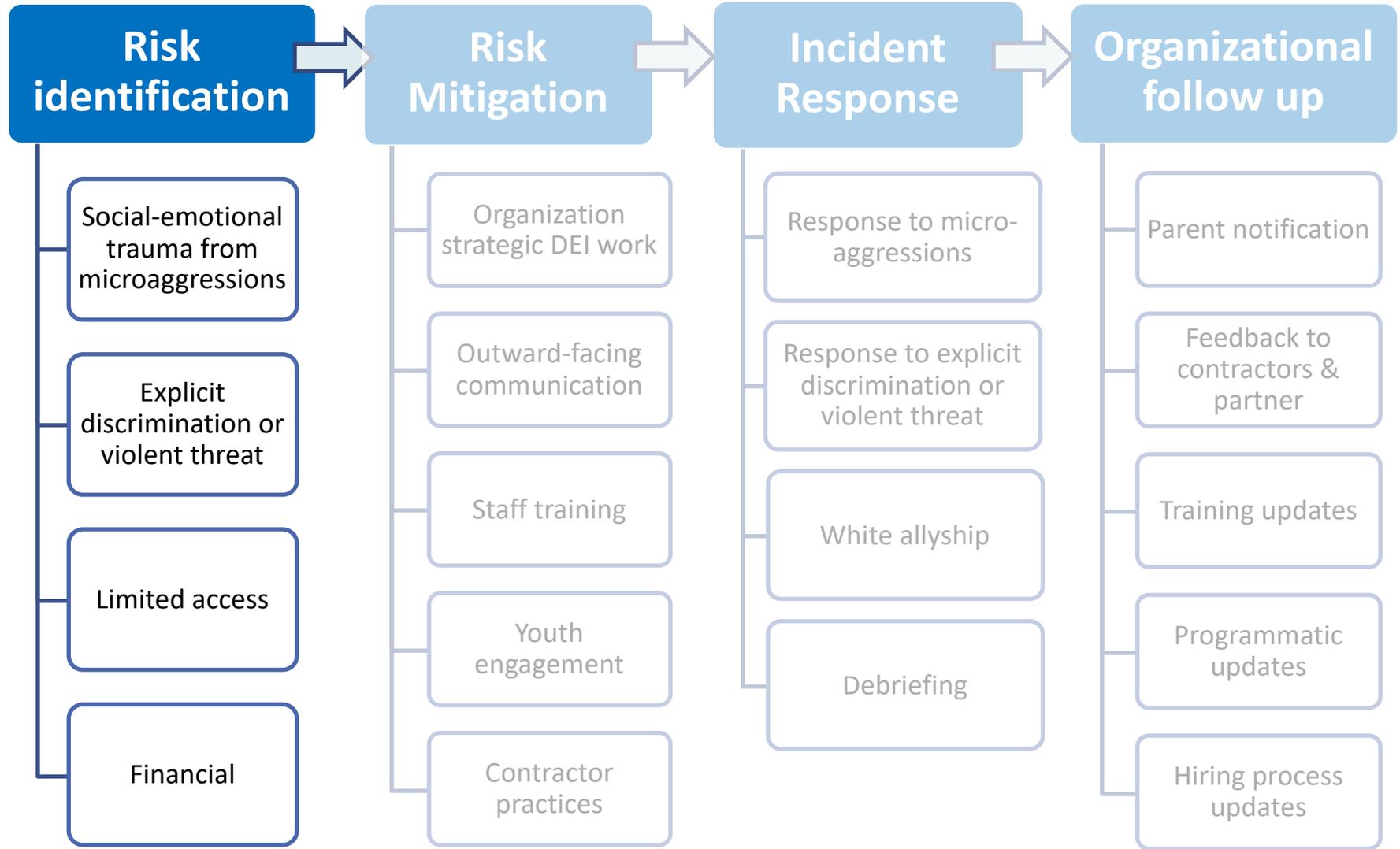
• <https://time.com/5562258/indigenous-environmental-justice/>

• <https://publiclands.colostate.edu/exclusion-on-public-lands-shenandoah-national-park-state-parks-and-segregation-in-the-american-south/>

Inclusion Risk Management at City Kids



Inclusion Risk Management at City Kids



Identifying Risks at City Kids

Risk identification

Social-emotional trauma from microaggressions

Explicit discrimination or violent threat

Limited access

Financial

What did you think of your first time camping?

I assume they come from

that major

res
health il

I bet ve

What kind of kids are these?

Are these low-income kids?

Are they

Are delin kids?

Are these troubled kids?

This must be so

This must be life changing for them

you are doing out here?

Are they at-risk kids?

*https

Identifying Risks at City Kids

Risk identification

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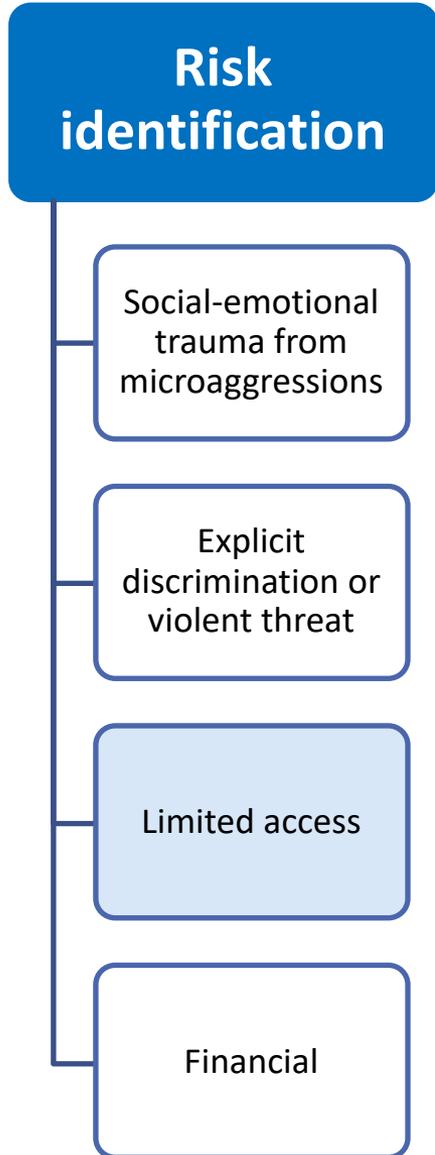
Explicit discrimination experienced by City Kids includes prejudicial treatment, racial slurs, and expands to threatening individuals unwanted physical contact, yelling, glaring, and verbal threats.

Youth reports a member of the public staring at them and pushing them out of the way

While no youth or staff have been physically harmed in a racist incident, these experiences are painful & traumatic.

City Kids anticipates the reality of physical violence based on the daily experiences lived of Black & Latinx people in the United States and the increased visibility & actions of white supremacists.

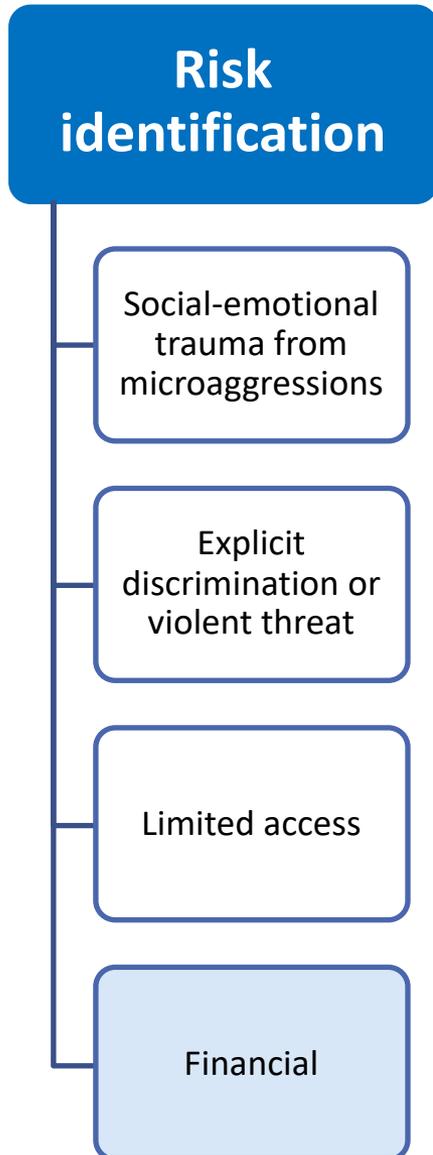
Identifying Risks at City Kids



City Kids has identified areas, businesses, and campgrounds where the risk of harm to youth and staff is greater than the benefit of traveling to or through those spaces. These areas are identified through one significant incident or repeated negative experiences.

This narrowing of space limits the program’s ability to travel freely, access to some public lands and introduces an additional layer of consideration to trip planning.

Identifying Risks at City Kids

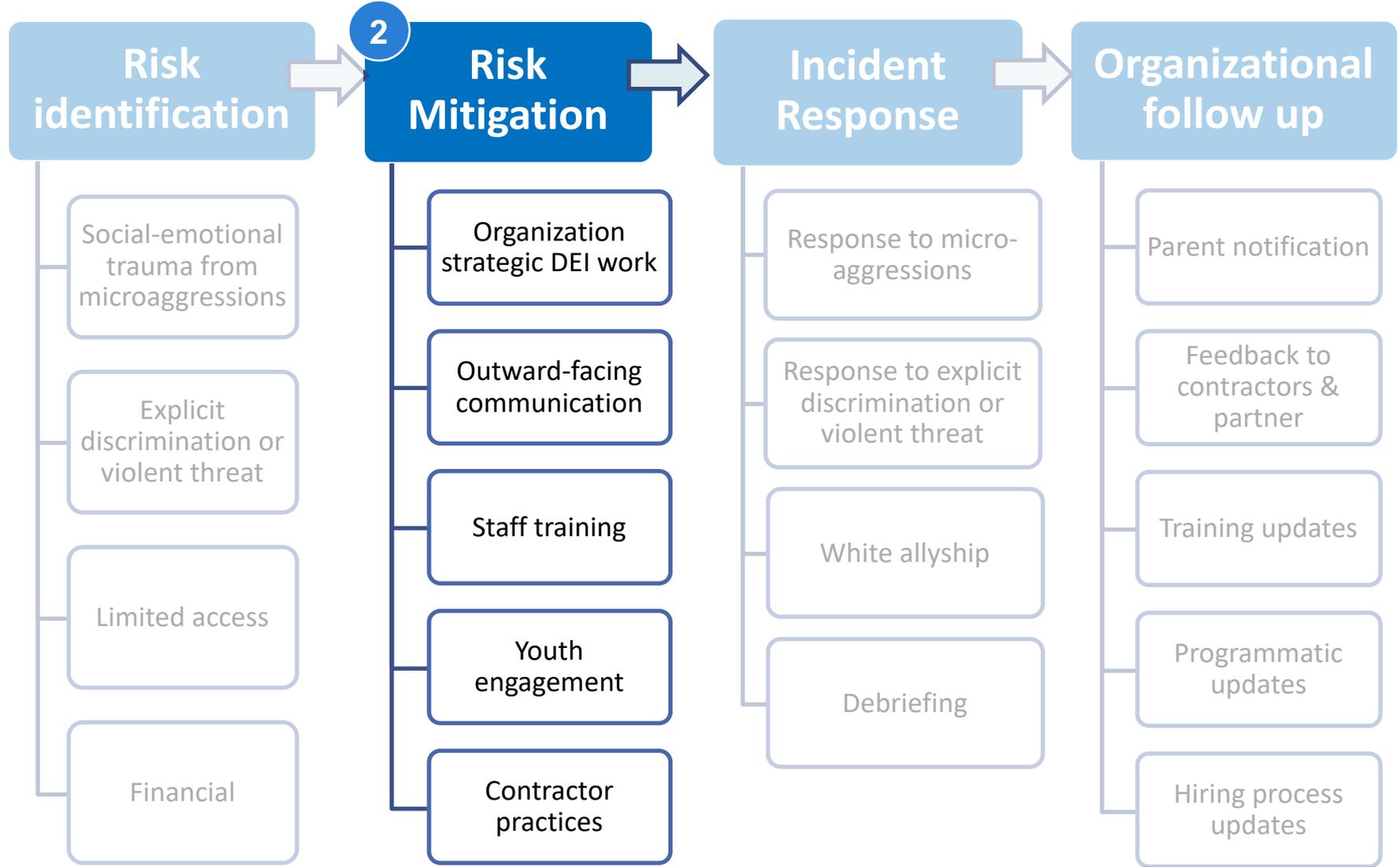


City Kids relies on a combination of individual donors, corporations, foundations, and federal grants to fund programs.

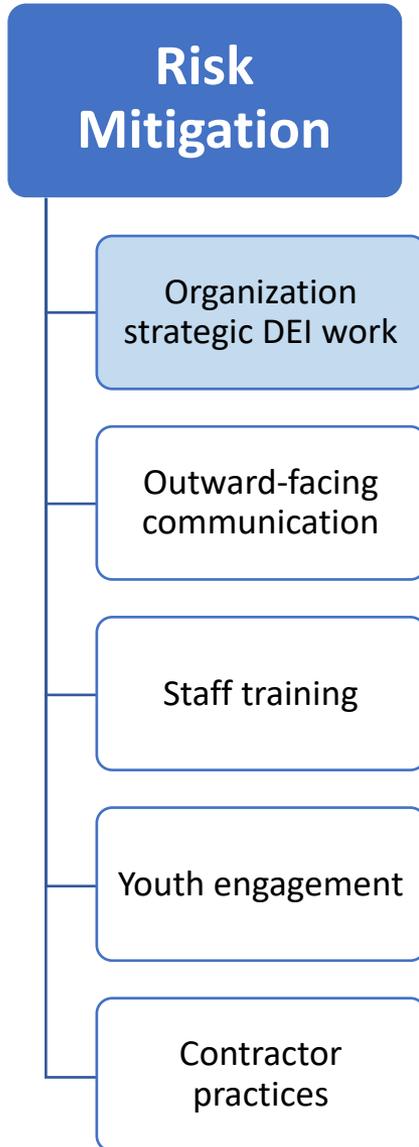
The organization, the staff and youth involved in fundraising experience tension in educating against harmful narratives and the reliance on donors for funding.

- “Selling” the story: subscribing to harmful narratives to secure funding
- Donor interactions can be a source of harm to staff & youth

Inclusion Risk Management at City Kids



Risk Mitigation at City Kids

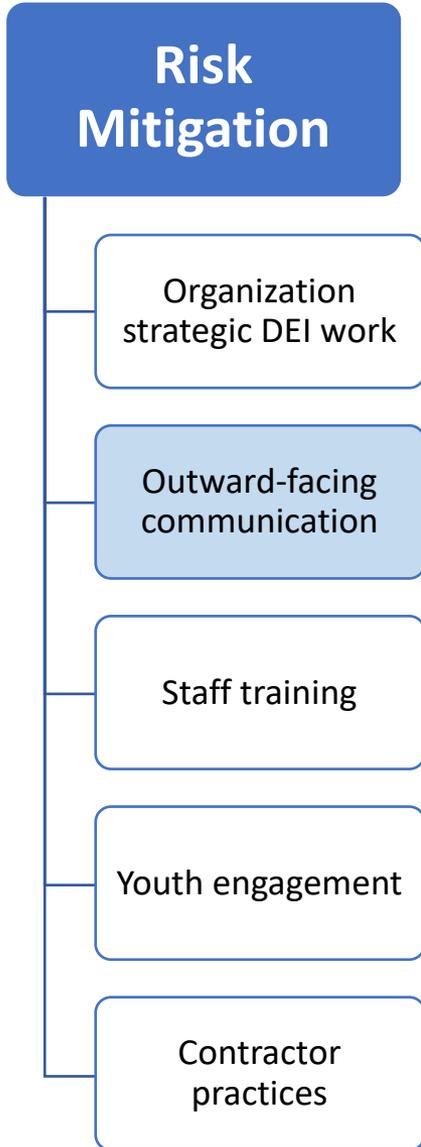


Strategic organizational DEI work has contributed to the organization's examination of our youth & staff experiences during programming.

City Kids is finishing a 3 year strategic plan that includes prioritizing DEI work. Related outcomes include:

- Reflection
- Resources dedicated to staff development
- Formalization of seasonal training curriculum
- Formalization of DEI curriculum for youth
- Improved hiring practices

Risk Mitigation at City Kids



External/Outward Facing Communication and Fundraising

- External communications firm audited City Kids in early 2019.
- City Kids staff, students (high school participants in grades 10th-12th), parents, board members and partners interviewed individually and in focus groups.

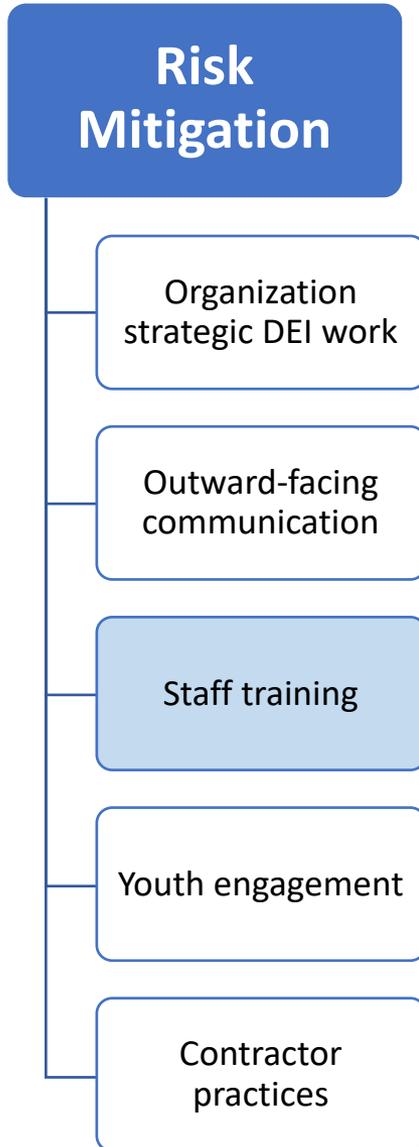
We found that:

- The overall tone of our materials is positive and empowering.
- We utilize quotes and stories directly from youth about their experiences are used to shape the external narratives about our programs

We continue to refine:

- How we define the populations we work with and the impact City Kids has, overall, on our participants.

Risk Mitigation at City Kids

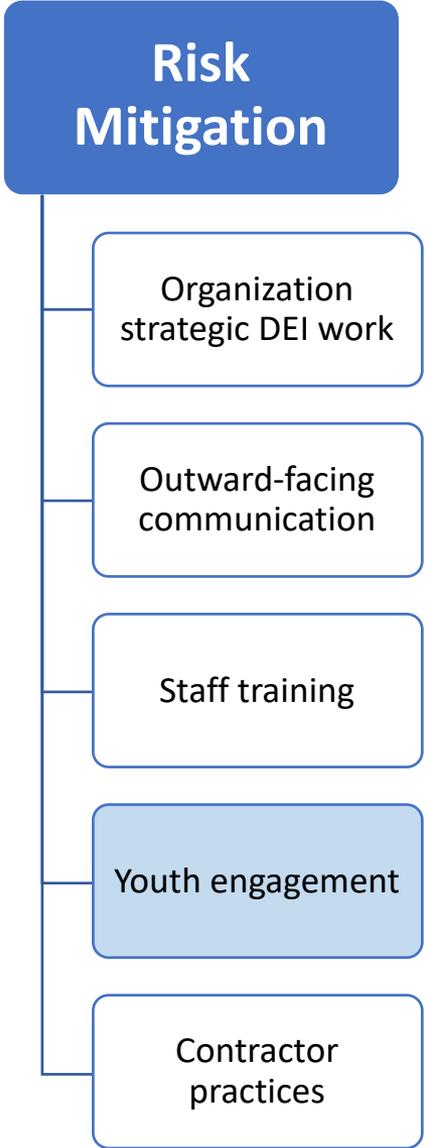


Staff training DEI curriculum focuses on clarifying explicit organizational beliefs and expectations for staff. It is a core component of training, as both a series of stand alone workshops and woven throughout.

Key topics include:

- Basic principles of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion
- Examination of individual identities, power & privilege
- Implicit bias in education
- Review of important issues to the CK community
- Incident mitigation & response

Risk Mitigation at City Kids



City Kids program youth are briefed on the expectation of encountering racism and training for response.

City Kids attempts to contextualize racism within the program. Themes at all levels include:

- Acknowledgement of risk with location or program specifics
- Share when you feel uncomfortable or unsafe
- Request help early from staff or teen leaders
- Maintain personal & group safety- listen to staff instructions to de-escalate the situation, yourself & support others
- Focus on response rather than reaction- there will be a place to share emotions when the group is safe

Curriculum on the historical context of public lands and current movements to diversify the outdoors has been a critical component in empowering youth to understand and advocate for their position in the outdoor community and public spaces.

Risk Mitigation at City Kids



Contractors pose risk because of the direct contact between contracted instructors, guides, facilitators and CK youth & staff. Contractors have been a historical source of harm to youth & staff.

City Kids manages this exposure through:

- Vetting
- Training
- Briefing
- Relationship building

Risk Mitigation: Contractor Practices Subcategories

Contractor Practices

Vetting

Training

Briefing

Relationship building

Describe the contractors experience working with diverse populations and any explicit stated DEI priorities.

1. What experience do you have working with a diversity of groups?
2. Does your company/org offer any specific training for staff in cultural competency or have any stated commitments to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion ?
3. Has the contractor experienced any reported complaints and how were they handled?
4. If there was an incident who would manage it and who should it be reported to?

Risk Mitigation: Contractor Practices Subcategories

Contractor Practices

Vetting

Training

Briefing

Relationship building

City Kids has started providing direct training for contractors & partners, focusing on long term partners with significant youth contact time. Training for contractors involved in backcountry travel is now understood as critical to joint decision-making during medical, behavioral, motivational challenges and evacuations.

Topics include:

- Basic cultural competency
- Implicit bias and it's impacts on instructors to understand youth behavior, read emotions, and see pain in medical complaints
- Being an ally for youth & staff when experiencing microaggressions & discrimination
- Short incident response direction

Risk Mitigation: Contractor Practices Subcategories

Contractor Practices

Vetting

Training

Briefing

Relationship building

Briefing: Notes/Conversations City Kids has with contractors in advance of partnership as to relay inclusive practices for programming. Briefing notes change depending on contractor and program type:

Climbing programs:

“Do not refer to a Black participant as a monkey while climbing- there is a long history in American of the term monkey used as an insult.”

Risk Mitigation: Contractor Practices Subcategories

Contractor Practices

Vetting

Training

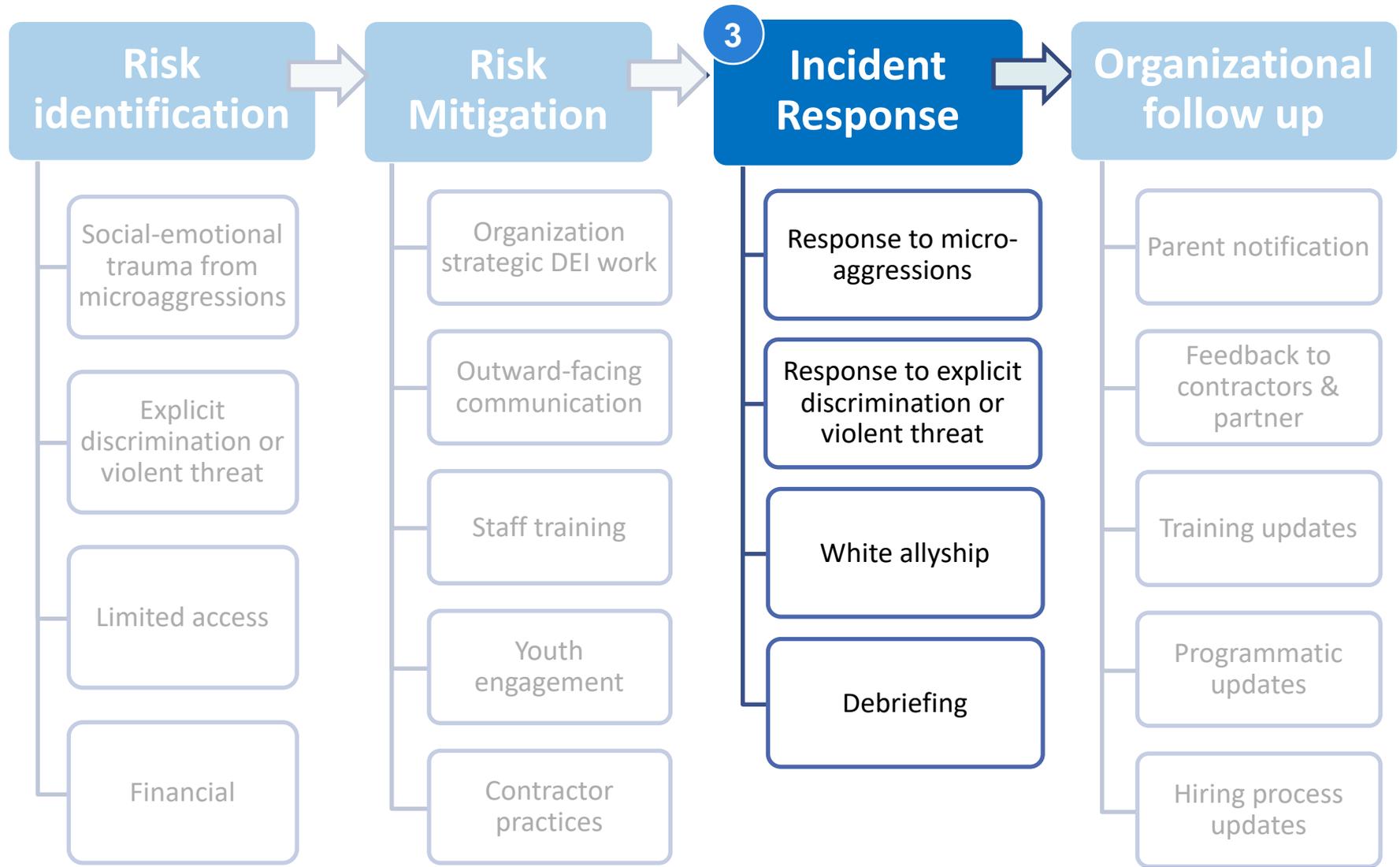
Briefing

Relationship building

City Kids strives to develop relationships with frequently visited locations to build local support & advocacy for youth and the program. Examples include:

- Bridger Teton National Forests
- Grand Teton National Park
- Patuxent Wildlife Refuge
- Sportrock Climbing Center
- EarthTrek Climbing Center
- Sandy Spring Adventure Park
- Various businesses in Jackson, WY for job shadow and internship sites
- Currently pursuing relationship with TCSAR & Teton County Sheriff's Department

Inclusion Risk Management at City Kids



Since 2016 City Kids tracks inclusion incidents in a reporting system – allows improved understanding & learning

Inclusion Incident Definition:

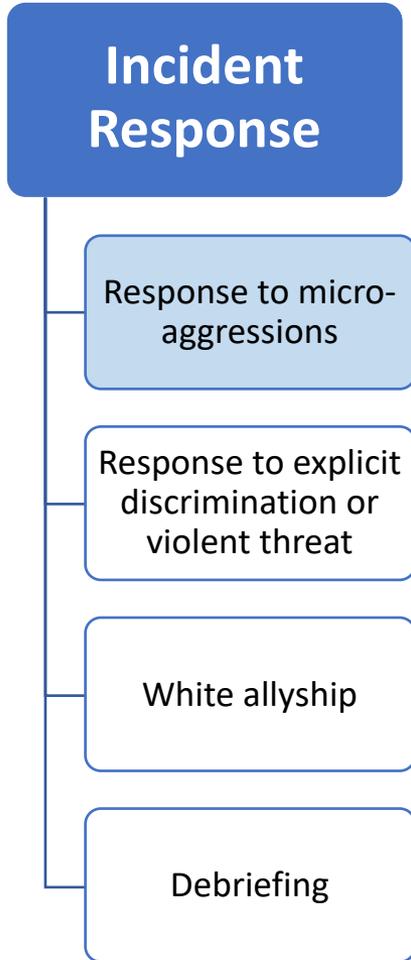
Any event that results in the marginalization or offense of a group or identity- these could be internal or external.

The definition & tracking within the greater CK incident system has allowed for a greater understanding of the frequency & occurrence of these events.

Outcomes:

- Increased reporting
- Data driven understanding of frequency & occurrence
- Youth & staff see visible support and resource allocation that create space for conversation
- Trends illuminate areas to focus on for risk mitigation
- Data enhances training resources

Incident Response at City Kids



Staff are trained to disrupt microaggressions :

- 1. Considerations when deciding to disrupt**
 - Is the person (s) involved hostile?
 - Is/has a youth or staff of color directly impacted?
 - Do you have competing priorities (managing a group, safety concern)?
 - What is the relationship between the person (s) & City Kids? What is our investment?
- 2. Maintain polite professionalism & embrace discomfort**
 - Are you in the right headspace to engage in this conversation?
- 3. Assess ability to engage - when determining depth of intervention**
 - Return problematic questions with questions
 - Return statements with questions or hard lines statements
 - Redirect actions
- 4. Direct members of the public to the website or provide next steps for further information/learning**

Incident Response at City Kids

Incident Response

Response to micro-aggressions

Response to explicit discrimination or violent threat

White allyship

Debriefing

1. Recognize threatening individuals
2. Prioritize youth safety
3. Divide staff resources to care for youth & staff to manage response
4. Validate youth emotions but work to de-escalate reactions to avoid escalating incidents –
 - Remind youth there will be space to process when everyone is safe
5. Be proactive in using available resources to access support (park staff, campground hosts: assess engaging authorities for friendliness & be cautious about calling the police)
6. If police are present- limit youth interaction

Incident Response at City Kids



White staff members are trained to consider a response based on allyship principles of:

- **Stand behind:** Acknowledge they are not directly harmed by racism, and follow the lead of a youth or staff
- **Stand beside:** In solidarity with a youth or staff member in their response.
- **Stand in front:** There is a safety concern or a youth or staff of color requests a white staff respond.

White staff should use their privilege to prioritize youth & staff of color when safety is a concern (angry or threatening individual and police interactions)

- White staff should work in coordination with POC staff to determine the appropriate staff member to manage response with external people
- Staff should always be present if youth interact with police as a guardian

Incident Response at City Kids



Debriefing occurs for both staff and youth immediately after an incident - there can be high stress for all involved.

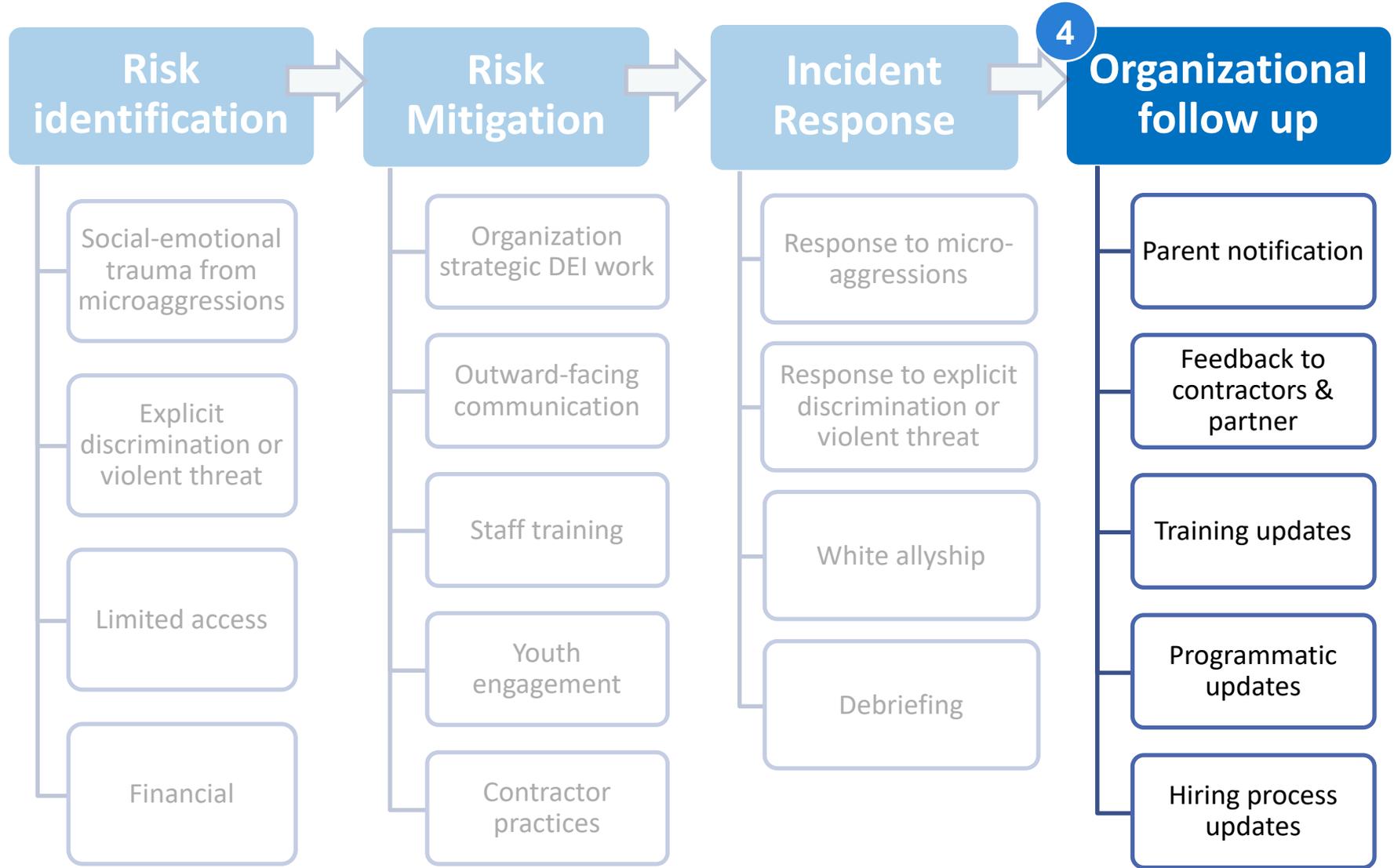
Youth Debriefing

- Focus on validation of youth experiences & emotions
- Request & accept feedback for staff on how the incident was managed
- Request input for youth next steps or suggestions for amends or healing

Staff Debriefing- Key Points

- Focus on validation of staff experiences & emotions
- Review incident response challenges, successes & failures
- Request input for next steps or suggestions for amends or healing
- Support for staff is dependent on racial identities
 - POC staff may have been directly impacted by the incident
 - White staff may need to be redirected to individual coaching if personal emotions & need for learning dominate a debrief in a way that's harmful for others

Inclusion Risk Management at City Kids



Organizational Follow-up at City Kids

Organizational follow up

Parent notification

Feedback to contractors & partner

Training updates

Programmatic updates

Hiring process updates

The incident review process has been beneficial to formalizing organizational next steps, follow-up and has helped shaped organizational change and practices.

As part of our Incident debrief process, policies and procedures are constantly adapted as we aim to mitigate and manage inclusion incidents in the future.

Next Steps

1. Plan a meeting to examine how your organization defines and responds to inclusion incidents.
2. Design a resource/training to strengthen staff ability to respond to micro-aggressions or discriminatory behaviors.
3. Create a debrief resource that includes guidance for responding to in.

Presenter Contact Information:

- **Monique Dailey** (City Kids Program Director) – monique@citykidsdc.org
- **Colleen McHugh** (City Kids Wyoming Site Director) – colleen@citykidsdc.org

Available Resources

- **Articles and Books Cited:**

- ***“The Story We’ve Been Told About America’s National Parks Is Incomplete”*** – Dina Gilio-Whitaker
 - <https://time.com/5562258/indigenous-environmental-justice/>
- ***“Exclusion on Public Lands: Shenandoah National Park, State Parks, and Segregation in the American South”*** – Tim Johansen, PLHC Researcher & Ariel Schnee, PLHC Project Manager
 - <https://publiclands.colostate.edu/exclusion-on-public-lands-shenandoah-national-park-state-parks-and-segregation-in-the-american-south/>
- ***“Microaggressions and Traumatic Stress: Theory, Research, and Clinical Treatment”*** – Kevin L. Nadal

- **Other Resources:**

- ***“Black Faces, White Spaces”*** – Carolyn Finney
- ***“The Adventure Gap”*** – James Mills
- ***“Going It Alone”*** – Rahawa Haile