The Cook County Juvenile Justice Task Force
Vision Paper

Community Justice:
Recommendations for Community-Based, Trauma-Informed, Restorative Solutions to Youth Crime and Conflict

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Community Justice Vision Paper: Recommendations for Community-Based, Trauma-Informed, Restorative Solutions to Youth Crime and Conflict

This white paper is project of the Cook County Juvenile Justice Task Force (CCJJCF):

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Broader Urban Involvement and Leadership Development (BUILD Inc.)
Center of Change
Community Justice Institute for Youth
Community Justice Network for Youth
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INTRODUCTION

This paper presents a vision for community-based, trauma-informed, restorative solutions to youth crime and conflict in Cook County (Illinois). It was written for young people across the county who deserve a better system, as well as their parents, families, and communities. It was also written for other key stakeholders who wish to support new approaches to neighborhood safety, for the judges, youth workers, executive directors, block club members, police officers and family leaders who dedicate their lives to making our communities more peaceful for all.

We have divided the paper into two sections:

1. *Reinvesting Our Efforts*
2. *Building a New Paradigm*

In the first section, we outline some of the main failures of Cook County's current juvenile justice system, and introduce our guiding thoughts on how the juvenile justice system can better support young people, while making our communities safer places to live. In this section we call for a one-to-one replacement of the dollars that are saved by reducing the population of the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center (CCJTDC), whereby those funds are reinvested in the communities with the greatest need for supportive services due to unjust neighborhood conditions. By using models such as Redeploy Illinois, which brought forth positive change in other jurisdictions around the state, our goal is to ensure adequate resources, staffing and volunteers in the communities we serve.

In the second section, we lay out a concrete proposal for alternatives to our present approach of centralized juvenile detention, an approach that is totally divorced from family and community supports. We propose the creation of 'Restorative Justice Hubs' across Cook County, community centers that can holistically address the needs of young people who perpetrate crimes, while also supporting community residents and victims of crime. Crucially, these hubs will serve as catalysts for community healing and education around the intergenerational cycles of trauma and systemic racism that all too often shape family and community life.

Finally, in the conclusion, we lay out a call for helping young people in trouble with the law to realize their full capacity in life. Central to this call is our belief that society has seriously misunderstood and misrepresented the potential of youth of color in under-resourced neighborhoods, those who are commonly called "high-risk." As we describe, this new lens on Cook County youth requires an expanded approach to accountability, one that helps young offenders, community organizations, and systems officials take greater responsibility for their actions, encouraging them to enhance their awareness of the impact those actions have on others.

REINVESTING OUR EFFORTS

Last year, Cook County spent more than $38 million dollars on juvenile detention.[1] These are precious resources that would be better used building the youth development and violence prevention capacity of under-resourced neighborhoods. With this alternative investment in mind, we call for an end to juvenile detention in Cook County for all but the most serious crimes, such as violent offenses involving guns. We envision a future where those resources currently dedicated to maintaining the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center (CCJTDC) are instead redirected to those areas with the greatest need for life-affirming investments in their young people.

Chicago's youth violence epidemic is concentrated in a relatively small number of communities. According to a recent article in the *Chicago Reporter*, nearly 80% of the more than 530 youth homicides in Chicago since 2008 occurred in just 22 community areas—yet these areas make up only one third of the city's overall population.[2] By and large, these are the same communities where the juvenile justice system remains heavily committed to a misguided juvenile detention strategy, as outlined in Figure 1 *(next page).* We believe that reinvesting our juvenile detention resources in these communities is essential for ending Cook County's prolonged youth violence crisis, and represents a major step towards addressing underlying racial disparities.

By our calculations, the expenditures named in Figure 1 represent a profound 'misinvestment' in Cook County youth and communities, whereby resources are being wasted on a juvenile detention strategy that is widely found to be harmful to young people, rather than an approach that could give court-involved youth the kinds of supports they need to take on healthier, more productive lives. We need a reinvestment strategy that changes Cook County's punitive paradigm for dealing with youth crime in under-resourced neighborhoods of color. The current paradigm has been unable to improve the life pathways for the young people it detains, as indicated by the incredibly high rate of CCJTDC's detainees who return within the same calendar year. Young people simply do not leave juvenile detention better equipped to deal with their neighborhood realities. Instead, they leave detention even more disconnected from their homes, schools, and communities.

[1] The 2011 Cook County Budget is available online at http://lookatcook.com. The juvenile detention budget is one of the departments listed under the public safety portion of the budget.

[2] "More Young People are Killed in Chicago than any other American City," *The Chicago Reporter,* July 2012.

Figure 1: Estimated Expenditures by Zip Code for 2011 CCJTDC Admissions[3]

Zip Codes and Corresponding Neighborhoods	Population	Cost per Zip Code
60620: Auburn Gresham, Beverly, Chatham, Greater Grand Crossing, Roseland, Washington Heights	269	$3,060,885
60636: Chicago Lawn, Gage Park, West Englewood	266	$3,026,748
60628: Pullman, Roseland, Washington Heights, West Pullman	265	$3,015,370
60644: Austin	249	$2,833,310
60623: North Lawndale, South Lawndale	247	$2,810,552
60621: Englewood, Greater Grand Crossing, Washington Park	246	$2,799,173
60624: East Garfield Park, Humboldt Park, North Lawndale, West Garfield Park	239	$2,719,522
60637: Greater Grand Crossing, Hyde Park, South Shore, Washington Park, Woodlawn	220	$2,503,326
60619: Avalon Park, Burnside, Calumet Heights, Chatham, Greater Grand Crossing, Roseland, South Shore	199	$2,264,372
60651: Austin, Humboldt Park	173	$1,968,524
Total	**2373**	**$27,001,781**

Why is reinvestment so vital?

The most disconnected youth in Cook County face very real threats, obstacles to healthy development that will not disappear overnight. These young people are indeed at risk of becoming workers in the drug trade, being shot, losing friends and families to violence, being separated from their loved through detention or incarceration, being displaced from their homes, suffering higher risk of mental illness such depression and anxiety[4] and a host of other phenomena that disproportionately impact Black and Latino youth within under-resourced communities. To help these young people succeed, it is necessary to reinvest in those community organizations and institutions that are dedicated to working with them and their families to overcome these challenges.

Furthermore, reinvestment is a critical step towards ending the longstanding patterns of systemic racism that have fueled cycles of trauma within these communities and undercut robust human development pathways. By comparison, most youth growing up in predominately White and affluent areas do not face a single one of the aforementioned threats, whereas youth

[3] Estimates are from the Institute for Public Safety and Social Justice at the Adler School of Professional Psychology. They are based on 2011 information for: admissions by zip code, average length of stay at CCJTDC, and daily costs per detainee. The cost per day used was $501.93, taken from the Open Data Portal for Cook County: https://cookcounty.socrata.com/Public-Safety/President-s-Office-Juvenile-Temporary-Detention-Ce/ix6b-at92

[4] " Locked Up and Locked Out: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered Yout hin Louisiana's Juvenile Justice System" Wesley Ware, Juvenile Justice Program of Louisiana

growing up in Cook County's most under-resourced areas may face every single one. This disparity leads to vast differences in human development opportunities, as revealed by a quick look at the 2011 CCJTDC admission demographics, showing more than 80% of detainees were Black, roughly 12% were Latino, and less than 3% were White.[5] Although Whites accounted for less than 3% of the CCJTDC juvenile detention population, they comprised nearly 45% of the Cook County population. These numbers point to great inequities in the ways young people across racial groups are supported and held accountable, inequities that must be addressed through major redirections of public funds.

Whereas the wrongdoing of White youth from affluent areas is often met with compassionate, and/or therapeutic responses, the wrongdoing of Black and Latino youth in under-resourced communities is typically met by pathologizing, criminalizing, and even traumatizing them and their loved ones. Consequently, those young people that are most in need of social supports and resource investments are the least likely to receive them. Among Black and Latino youth, LGBTQ youth and youth with disabilities are especially vulnerable, having less access to social services while being at a greater risk of exposure. In addition to traumas related to violence and financial instability, LGBTQ youth are subjected to disadvantages related to non-normative gender and sexual identities. Like race and ethnicity, these identities can exasperate vulnerability within the juvenile justice system and increase the likelihood of youth being targeted by law enforcement[6].

Tragically, the most widely applied intervention in under-resourced areas is the criminal justice system, which, once employed, often diminishes rather than enhances the future potential of young people. This results in a situation where the most marginalized youth are the first ones to be further isolated. Black and Latino youth are many times more likely to be removed from whatever family, peer, or community supports they have. Rather than being connected to more resources and empowering relationships, their detention makes them almost totally disconnected from their home, school, and neighborhood environments. What is the effect of this heightened disconnection through detention? As many experts agree, it can be totally devastating, propelling cycles of arrest and confinement, while dramatically inhibiting young people's educational and employment trajectories.[7]

In order to reverse this dependence on juvenile detention, it is necessary to strengthen the human development pathways in those neighborhoods where young people are most likely to get in trouble with the law and/or get involved in violence. We believe Cook County must seize the opportunity to build those pathways. By reinvesting fully in the creation and expansion of neighborhood-based resources, the county government can empower community organizations and resident leaders to run the supportive spaces needed for marginalized youth and families in under-resourced areas.

[5] ''The Conscious Chicagoan's Guide to Youth Detention and Incarceration." *Mariame Kaba, Chicago Youth Justice Data Project (Project NIA), August 2012.*

[6] "We Had Three of Them: Addressing The Invisibility Of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Gender Non-conforming Youth In the Juvenile Justice System" Angela Irvine, Columbia Journal on Gender and Law, 2010

[7] *The Dangers of Detention: The Impact of Incarcerating Youth in Detention and Other Secure Facilities.* Barry Holman and Jason Ziedenberg, A Justice Policy Institute Report.

BUILDING A NEW PARADIGM

The vision we describe is meant to build upon Cook County's recent momentum in juvenile justice reform. Indeed, Cook County has become a model for reducing the number of young people held in its Juvenile Temporary Detention Center. In 2012 to date, fewer than 300 young people are held in the CCJTDC on an average day, whereas in the late 1990s there were well over 600 youth being detained every day.[8] By all accounts, this is significant progress.

However, this progress is far from enough. Not only does Cook County need to continue reducing its number of juvenile detainees, the county must help to advance a new paradigm for juvenile justice, one that is better equipped to address the endemic crisis of youth violence in Chicago neighborhoods and surrounding municipalities.

How can we improve the violence prevention benefits of our juvenile justice system?

This is a profoundly important policy question that receives far too little attention. Adequately responding to the question requires fundamentally reworking how youth in trouble with the law are supported and held accountable in their home communities. By forming real partnerships with the families and residents they serve, the agencies that comprise Cook County's juvenile justice system can strengthen neighborhood capacity for culturally competent peacemaking and conflict resolution that not only address experiences with trauma, but race, gender and sexuality as well. In so doing, these agencies will also be helping to change the long-standing patterns of disproportionate minority confinement that have persisted in Cook County, even as the total number of juvenile detainees has fallen in recent years.

What does it mean to form partnerships with families and community residents?

Rather than the current punitive model that is almost entirely disconnected from community life, systems-involved youth need to receive support from within their own communities, in addition to the assistance they receive from personnel in the current juvenile justice system. Importantly, this support should be multi-layered, working not just with individual young people but also with their families to help to reduce the pressures the family feels, and thus help to alleviate some of the potential drivers for juvenile wrongdoing.

It is precisely this approach that states like New York have been pioneering in recent years,[9] striving to reduce the institutionalization of young people and to make those institutional placements that do occur more connected to life outside. Yet although progress is being made in certain parts of the country, there is enormous room for improvement. Cook County, in particular, is well positioned for advancing responsible community-based solutions, for developing true community-systems partnerships that hold youth accountable while strengthening rather than rupturing family life.

What exactly would these partnerships look like? How would they be facilitated?

At the heart of our vision are **Restorative Justice Hubs**, which are the centerpiece of the new juvenile justice paradigm we are proposing. These hubs will ensure that every young person

[8] Information made available through the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative, a project of Annie E. Casey.
[9] Charting a New Course: A Blueprint for Transforming Juvenile Justice in New York State. December, 2009. A Report of Governor David Pattersons's Task Force on Transforming Juvenile Justice.

has the supports they need to succeed in their community, focusing on those with the greatest unrecognized potential need and helping them to transform their path. Importantly, they will serve as an intermediary between system agencies and community life.

In practice, these hubs will act as coordinating and referral centers in the various areas they serve. They will be community spaces that actively embody the principles of restorative justice, working to appropriately strengthen the relationships between young offenders, victims and survivors of crime, family members, and other impacted residents. By using the methods of restorative justice – such as peacemaking circles – these hubs will also serve as training centers for local residents to learn how to become more active leaders in neighborhood safety efforts.

How would these hubs address individual-level traumas?

Among the many advantages of the Restorative Hub model, is its capacity to deliver the types of care that can help young people to overcome whatever traumas they may have faced in their lives, either in their homes, in their neighborhoods, or in outside institutions. Adverse childhood experiences, or trauma that occurs before the age of 18, have been shown to have an enduring effect in life functioning, brain development, achievement orientation, and health.[10] Youth that have experienced significant adverse childhood experiences are more likely to commit crimes, and violent offences in particular, than individuals that have not experienced trauma.[11]

Working with youth that have been disproportionately affected by adverse experiences requires specific interventions that can maximize positive development and resilience. These include: basic skill building, access to caring adults, and greater connectedness to community, culture, positive rituals, and supports. All of these contribute to helping reverse a sense of lack of competence and safety in the world that many traumatized individuals feel. [12] Not coincidentally, these factors are directly aligned with the requirements of Restorative Hubs, which offer young people access to these resources, connections and skill building opportunities.

One of the main goals of a Restorative Hub is to provide a structured and supportive atmosphere in which to promote healing and ongoing personal development. They are designed to help youth to recognize and employ healthy boundaries, to behave in a socially appropriate fashion, to understand grey areas of logic, to build knowledge and skills with professional applications, to express emotions in a positive way, and to view themselves as active agents in their own achievement. These goals, which are fundamental components of restorative youth development, all work together to help young people build a sense of overall capability.

Furthermore, many traumatized youth have compromised relationships with parents and caregivers. For this reason, having access to other reliable, consistent, caring adults in a

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[10] Dube SR, Anda RF, et al. "Exposure to abuse, neglect, and household dysfunction among adults who witnessed intimate partner violence as children: implications for health and social services." *Violence and Victims,* 2002.

[11] Felitti VJ, Anda RF, et al. "Relationship of Childhood Abuse and Household Dysfunction to Many of the Leading Causes of Death in Adults." *American Journal of Preventative Medicine,* 1998.

[12] For more on the relationship between community capacity and childhood trauma, see: "Effects of Higher Community Capacity Among Young Adults: Fewer Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), Higher Social/Emotional Support and Better Health." Dario Longhi and Laura Porter, November 2010.

community-based setting is an absolute prerequisite to establishing a Restorative Hub. These adults provide hospitality and accompaniment, two seminal components of providing a sense of attachment and belonging for youth. Hospitality means that space is provided that welcomes youth and nourishes them through affirmation, openness and respect. Meanwhile for young people in the Restorative Hubs, respect for the space is the only prerequisite to belonging. Within the hub, youth can expect to be provided models for positive boundaries and positive relationships with others. Meanwhile, accompaniment means that a caring, responsible adult will walk with a young person through obstacles or other pivotal life moments, offering them support, advice, advocacy, and education.

In summary, these Restorative Hubs would function as the place for the delivering a wide range of holistic, trauma-informed services. While certainly not limited to the following list, these services would include:

- Pairing young people with an adult mentors from the community,
- Working with each youth to develop an individual life plans that account for basic skill acquisition, and supporting them as they work towards its implementation,
- Teaching youth marketable skills and helping them find employment,
- Intergenerational circles where supportive members of the community meet with young people returning from detention or incarceration,
- Peer circles to build respect among youth at opposing sides of neighborhood tensions,
- Accompaniment for high-potential young people dealing with substantial confusion, personal pain, and/or difficulty reconnecting with their families and peers,
- Active partnerships with other community-based organizations and agencies that are vital to the success of the youth they serve.

Restorative Hubs can offer safe places where trauma-informed circle keepers and other adult allies such as community leaders and repurposed staff from the detention center can help young people to create a positive vision for themselves beyond whatever wounds they may have suffered. Of course, in and of themselves, Restorative Hubs cannot guarantee community safety. Each hub would need substantial collaboration with nearby schools, community based organizations, faith based agencies, and supportive partners from the public safety system. All of these institutions have a vital role to play in helping young people to reach their potential, especially in under-resourced areas facing major social and economic challenges.

Thus, collaboration across community leaders and institutions is an essential part of the Restorative Hub model. When neighborhood institutions are disconnected from one another, it is often young people who pay the price. Yet when working together, active institutional partners can build the human development pathways that young people need, helping youth learn how to thrive amidst whatever challenges they may be facing. For example, schools can establish programs that allow disconnected young people to get caught up in class and can help these youth to launch their own restorative justice programs and leadership efforts.[13]

Additionally, it will be important to transition qualified staff from the detention center to community-based services. For example, staff members from the detention center who have worked with youth for years can be trained to support community programs, adding to a smooth transition of knowledge, labor and experience and social capital. Community organizations can

[13] For more on school-based approaches to restorative justice, see "From Policy to Standard Practice: Restorative Justice in Chicago Public Schools." By the High Hopes Campaign, Spring 2012.

create systems of support that link job development, counseling, and recreational opportunities across agencies. Moreover, law enforcement and other juvenile justice personnel such as officers from detention and probation can create positive platforms for supporting young people before they ever get to the moment of arrest.

Creating this level of community coordination and capacity will take significant time to develop, and each stage in this countywide developmental journey would need well-designed evaluation metrics that clearly mark the public safety benefits. Yet – with the increasing likelihood of CCJTDC closing – now is the ideal time to begin active pilot programs that start to build towards this vision.

CONCLUSION

Amid major changes underway for juvenile justice in Cook County, now is the perfect time to work towards the platform described above. Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle has openly called for shutting down the Juvenile Temporary Detention Center and is in the process of releasing limited resources to fund community-based alternatives. This change in government policy is the fruit of years of grassroots organizing and advocacy and has the potential to dramatically improve public supports for our highest need youth. However, just because systems are changing does not mean they are leading to more just outcomes.

The current shifts in juvenile justice policy and practice do not guarantee improved life outcomes for Cook County youth or communities. In fact, if youth and community leaders do not hold systems officials accountable, we may be moving towards a future where young people of color are simply detained by more institutions in more places, without ever receiving the supports and neighborhood resources they need to thrive. In order to effectively implement the vision that we have described, it is absolutely necessary that Cook County reinvest the money it currently spends on detaining our young people, putting it into those communities with the greatest need.

Moreover, Cook County must provide clear incentives for community-based organizations and other support systems to work with young people in trouble with the law. These incentives should be well tracked and mapped onto comprehensive plans for building community capacity. Indeed, local advisory boards should be developed that can monitor the efforts to build out coordinated supports in each target geography. Only when combined with this level of coordination and capacity building will the Restorative Hub model realize its full promise.

Cook County annually spends the majority of its vast juvenile detention budget in a relatively small number of zip codes. If the county reinvests these dollars in the strategy outlined above, it can get dramatically better returns on its investment. However, if the county does not reinvest these dollars in the communities of greatest need, it is asking residents of those areas to assume substantial additional risks to their safety without funding the types of programs and initiatives that could effectively manage those risks. This is a very real danger.

As we all labor to design the best possible future for juvenile justice in Cook County, we would like your help keeping the above ideas and concerns at the forefront of the process. We know this vision will take years to responsibly develop; yet the time to begin the work is now.