

INTRODUCTION

This paper presents a vision for community-based, trauma-informed, restorative solutions to youth crime and conflict in Cook County. It was written for young Chicagoans 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*, and 2) *Building a New Paradigm*. In the first section we outline some of the main limitations 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.

In the next 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 around the intergenerational cycles of individual and systemic traumas that all too often shape family and community life.

Taken together, these two sections lay the foundation for creating a neighborhood-based juvenile justice system. As the resources and responsibility for juvenile justice are shifted to the community-level, we can better empower communities to address youth crime and conflict. In so doing, we will improve the violence prevention benefits of the juvenile justice system. Residents will be supported to mentor court involved youth, neighbors will be trained to create peace between rivaling youth, and families will be helped to overcome difficult wounds. By investing in the human capital of Cook County communities, we can indeed transform the cycles of fear, oppression, and trauma that have fueled the youth violence epidemic in the Chicago area. In addition to youth accountability, the Cook County juvenile justice system will become a positive force for family healing and neighborhood transformation. In taking these steps, we will indeed help our young people to realize their full capacity in life, no matter what obstacles they face.

REINVESTING OUR EFFORTS

Last year Cook County spent over 38 million dollars on juvenile detention.¹ These are precious resources that would be better used building the youth development, family support and violence prevention capacity of under-resourced neighborhoods. With these alternative investments in mind, we call for an end to juvenile detention in Cook County for all but the most serious crimes. Instead we envision a future where those resources currently dedicated to maintaining the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center (CCJTDC) are 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 below. 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 empowered lifestyles. We need a reinvestment strategy that changes Cook County's strictly punitive response to youth crime in under-resourced neighborhoods of color. The current approach has been largely 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 home, school, or neighborhood realities. Instead, they depart even more disconnected from their families and communities, a trend that reaffirms the need for a fundamental shift in the philosophies and practices that guide our approach to neighborhood safety.

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 Admissions³

Zip Codes: With Corresponding & Adjoining Neighborhoods	Population	Cost per Zip Code
60620: Auburn Gresham, Beverly, Chatham, 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, Grand Crossing, Washington Park	246	\$ 2,799,173
60624: East Garfield Park, Humboldt Park, North Lawndale, West Garfield Park	239	\$ 2,719,522
60637: Grand Crossing, Hyde Park, South Shore, Washington Park, Woodlawn	220	\$ 2,503,326
60619: Avalon Park, Burnside, Calumet Heights, Chatham, Grand Crossing	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 ones through detention or incarceration, being displaced from their homes, and a host of other phenomena that disproportionately impact Black and Latino youth in 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 aggravated cycles of trauma within these communities and undercut robust human development pathways. Whereas youth growing up in predominately White and affluent areas are less likely to face the aforementioned threats, young people growing up in Cook County’s most under-resourced areas may face every single one. This disparity leads to vast

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>

differences in human development opportunities, as revealed by a quick look at the 2011 CCJTDC admission demographics, where over 80% of detainees were Black, roughly 12% were Latino, and less than 3% were White.⁴ 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 interventions. Consequently, those young people that are most in need of social supports and resource investments are the least likely to receive them. Tragically, the most widely applied vehicle for 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.⁵

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 can help 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 areas that are otherwise heavily under-resourced.

⁴ "The Conscious Chicagoan's Guide to Youth Detention and Incarceration." *Mariame Kaba, Chicago Youth Justice Data Project (Project NIA), August 2012.*

⁵ *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, there are less than 300 young people in the CCJTDC on an average day, whereas in the late 1990s there were well over 600 youth being detained every day.⁶ 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 neighborhood-based model for juvenile justice, one that is better equipped to address the endemic crisis of youth violence in Chicago communities and surrounding municipalities.

How can we improve the violence prevention benefits of our juvenile justice system? Adequately responding to this 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 peacemaking, family engagement and local leadership initiatives. In so doing, these systems 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.

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 court-involved young person has the supports they need to succeed in their community, focusing on their under-recognized potential and helping them to transform their path. Importantly, the hubs will serve as an intermediary between system agencies and community life.

Rather than the current punitive model that is almost entirely disconnected from community life, court-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. This support should be multi-layered, working not just with individual young people but also with their families to help to reduce the regular pressures they experience. By providing these family supports, we can help to alleviate some of the potential drivers for juvenile wrongdoing.

⁶ Information made available through the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative, a project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

In practice, Restorative Hubs 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 offer safe places where adult allies can help young people to develop meaningful leadership roles and to create a positive vision for themselves beyond whatever wounds they may have suffered.

How will these hubs collaborate with other community groups and institutions like schools?

In and of themselves, Restorative Hubs cannot guarantee community safety or improved life outcomes for court-involved youth. Each hub will 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 reach their potential, especially in those areas facing major social and economic challenges.

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 peacemaking programs and leadership efforts.⁷ Community coalitions can create systems of support that link job development, counseling, and recreational opportunities across organizations. Moreover, law enforcement personnel 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 developmental journey would need well-designed evaluation metrics that clearly mark the public safety benefits. Yet now is the ideal time to begin active pilot programs that start to build towards this vision.

How would the Restorative Hubs address individual-level traumas? Among the many advantages of the Restorative Hub model is the 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

⁷ 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.

functioning, brain development, achievement orientation, and health.⁸ 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.⁹

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 interventions can help to enhance the feelings of competence and safety that many traumatized individuals routinely live without.¹⁰ This focus on positive development and resilience is reflected in the requirements of Restorative Hubs, which offer young people access to the resources, relationships and referrals they need to succeed.

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 recognize and employ healthy boundaries, to behave in a socially appropriate fashion, 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 community-based setting is an absolute prerequisite to establishing a Restorative Hub. These adults offer accompaniment and hospitality, two seminal components of providing a sense of attachment and belonging for youth. Accompaniment means that caring, responsible adults will help young people to navigate their personal pain, confusion, and/or difficulty reconnecting with their families and peers. Hospitality means that space is provided that welcomes youth and nourishes them through affirmation, openness and respect. At the same time – for young people in the Restorative Hubs – respect for the space will be the only prerequisite to belonging.

⁸ 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.

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ 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.

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

- Pairing young people with adult mentors from the community,
- Peer circles to build respect among youth at opposing sides of neighborhood tensions,
- Intergenerational circles where supportive members of the community meet with young people returning from detention or incarceration,
- Accompaniment for young people, whereby a caring, responsible adult walks with a young person through difficult life moments, offering them support, advocacy, and education,
- Working with each young person to develop an individual life plan that accounts for basic skill acquisition, and supporting them as they work towards its implementation,
- Connecting youth with other needed resources, like job training and employment.

What about providing young people with actual jobs? As indicated above, active partnerships with other community-based organizations and agencies are vital to the success of Restorative Hubs. In order to help young people find employment, some of these partnerships will need to have a major focus on youth job creation. While Restorative Hubs and other community organizations can help train youth in marketable skills, they cannot single-handedly solve the youth jobs crisis in Cook County. The absence of sufficient jobs for our young people is an unquestionable contributor to youth crime, and youth jobs programs must be expanded for participants in the Restorative Hubs to fully implement their individual life plans. Moving forward, the Cook County Juvenile Justice Task Force is eager to link our juvenile justice vision to robust job creation and workforce development programs in the region.

CONCLUSION

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 fundamental change will take years to responsibly develop; yet the time to begin the work is now.