

Mikva

Challenge IL



State of
Chicago
Youth
2021



Mikva Challenge is a non-partisan, not for profit founded on the premise that youth voice and participation matter, and that our civic and political life will be stronger when youth participate and help shape their own destinies.

Mission

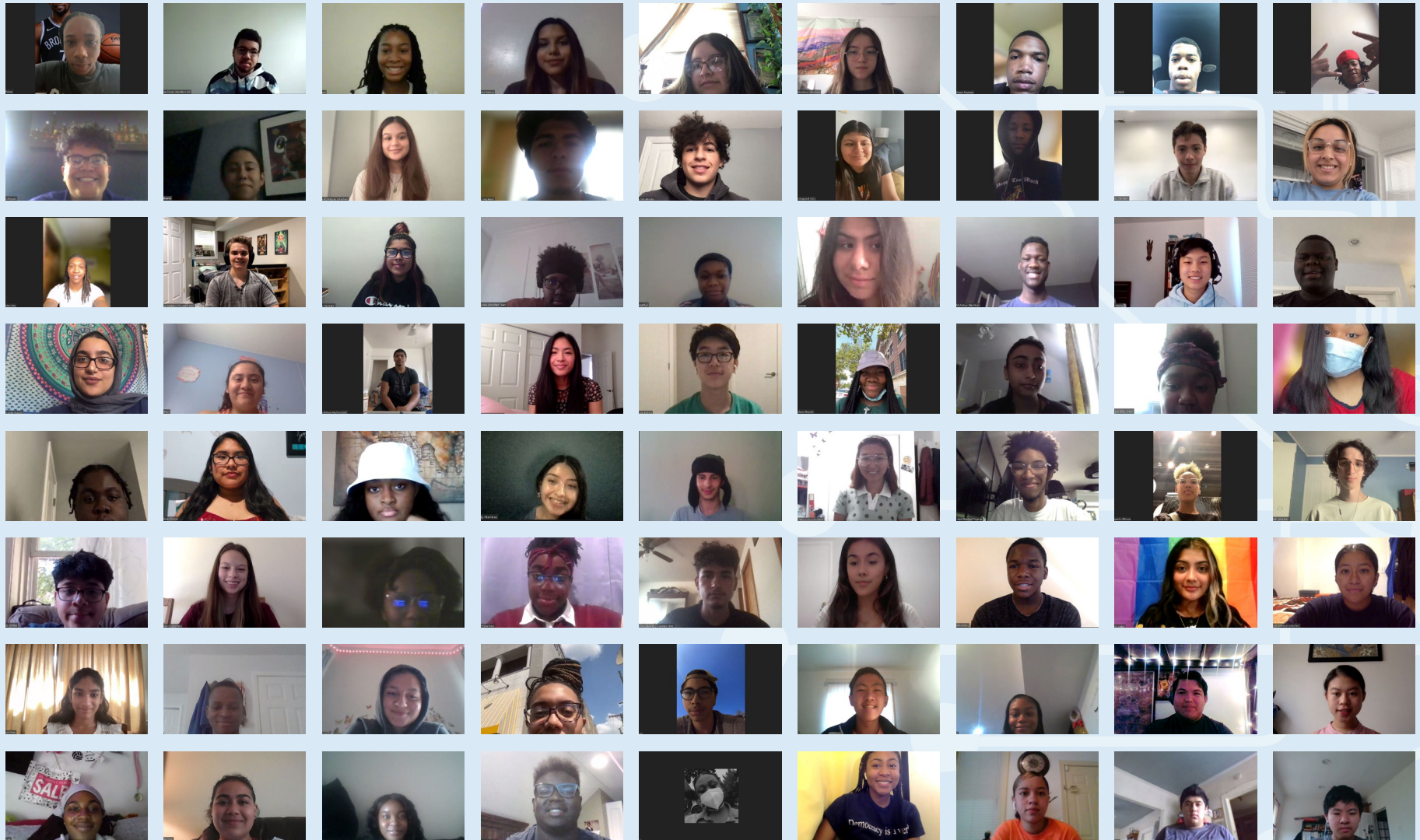
To develop youth to be empowered, informed, and active citizens who will promote a just and equitable society.

Values

- By intentionally reaching out to under-resourced communities and schools, we create opportunities for youth to elevate the issues that are important to them and their community.
- Policymakers make better decisions when youth voice is included in decision-making.
- Community involvement is an essential experience for young people to have a voice in their future.
- By remaining non-partisan, we make space for young people to form their own opinions and choose the candidates and issues they want to support.

Visit us at mikvachallenge.org.

72 Council Members



Mikva Challenge Citywide and Neighborhood Councils

The councils strengthen youth participation in the formation, implementation and evaluation of public policy in city government and in local decision-making in their communities through the creation of issue-based and neighborhood-based youth councils.

Councils serve as a mechanism for a broader base of Chicago youth to have input on key city and community policy and public safety decisions that significantly impact youth.

Participation is open to all Chicago students in **9th-12th grade for Citywide Councils** and students in **7th-9th grade** in the respective neighborhoods for **Neighborhood Councils**.

**Also includes inter-council Chicago Youth Response Team (CYRT).*

Neighborhood Leadership Initiative Action Summer

This year, the Neighborhood Leadership Initiative completed its first ever six-week Action Summer focused on youth-led safety strategies to curb the violence within their communities. Youth across all three of our councils — Gage Park, New City/Back of the Yards, North Lawndale — came together this summer despite an ongoing pandemic and spikes in violence to take action, build community with one another, explore their identities within their communities, and engaged in different strategies for community change. Throughout the summer, youth from NLI's south and west side neighborhood councils unpacked the amplified violence that they saw going on in their communities and developed youth-led safety strategies for navigating within their respective communities. Youth were also equipped with Restorative Justice training and developed their own conflict resolution strategies in order to be able to navigate conflicts that they may experience. Council members then presented to local elected officials and District Coordinating Officers their Collective Vision of Safety and Top 10 Tips for Navigating your Community as anti-violence community resources.

City Wide Action Councils Think Tank Summer

The Citywide Youth Councils engaged in their annual six-week Think Tank summer that focuses on removing barriers to help youth participate in the formation, implementation, and evaluation of public policy in city government. Our youth councils serve as policy experts and advocates, helping the CEO of Chicago Public Schools, the Cook County Board President, City Commissioners, and other city leaders make public policy decisions that significantly impact youth citywide. Youth gather for six weeks with their individual councils to conduct research, interview experts in the field, build community with one another, and build up their advocacy skills throughout the process. Their policy recommendations are then presented to their respective Decision Makers and stakeholders in order to collaboratively include youth voice in future policy decisions.

Neighborhood Leadership Initiative

Gage Park Council

Jessica Ballesteros
John Hancock High School

Xitlali Colotl
Curie High School

Ana Djingarov
Nightingale Elementary School

Matthew Djingarov
Roosevelt High School

Hugo Garcia
Nightingale Elementary School

Alberto Hernandez
Tamayo Acero School

Jesus Martinez
Lane Tech College Prep

MaKhyla Marzette
Francis M. McKay Elementary

Alexis Ortega
Hernandez Middle School

Angel Rodriguez
Muchin College Prep

Lizette Solano
Nightingale Elementary School

Ricardo Tirado
Acero Garcia High School

Stephanie Tirado
Acero Tamayo Elementary

Kayla Torres
Acero Tamayo Elementary

Domitila Vargas
Acero Garcia High School

DeAngelo Zermeno
Noble Mansueto High School

Yelitza Zermeno
Acero Tamayo Elementary

North Lawndale

Ifeoma Chizea-Aninyei
Frazier Magnet Elementary School

Re'Yonna less
KIPP Academy

Layla NDiaye
Frazier International Magnet School

Taisja Luckey
Multicultural HS

Frederick Milner
Curie Metropolitan High School

Faezuan Milner
Crown Community Academy

Travis Washington
Legacy Charter School

Amya Anderson
Frazier International

Londyn Robison
A.N. Pritzker Elementary School

D'niya Fobbs
Chalmers Elementary

Hailey Wiley
Laura Ward STEM School

Krislyn Milner
Dwight D. Eisenhower High School

New City/Back of the Yards

Carlos Alanis
Hamline Elementary School

TiMarje Amos
Sherman School of Excellence

Saidrick Berry
Kenwood Academy

Robyn Burson
Daley Elementary

Layla Chacha
Phoenix Military Academy

Ta'Mela Collins
Richard J. Daley Elementary

Rosalinda Garcia
Whitney M. Young High School

Naivi Gomez
Augustin Lara Academy

Michelle Hernandez
Whitney M. Young High School

Johanna Ramirez
Agustin Lara academy

Sahirah Shields
Daley Elementary

William Stokes
Dewey School of Excellence

Martrell Wardell
Dewey School of Excellence

Citywide Youth Councils

CPS Student Advisory Council (SAC)

Meredith Joncha
Lindblom Math and Science Academy

Cillian Halbleib
The Chicago High School for the Arts

Ta'Jai Johnson
Fenger Academy High School

Destiny Vasquez
George Washington High School

Greatful Nwokocha
Hubbard High School

Ezzard Dennis
Chicago Military High School

Janet Gomez
Benito Juarez Community Academy

Favour Mamudu
Sullivan High School

Omolara Atoyebi
Wendell Phillips Academy

Sofia Fatima
Amundsen High School

Lucero Hernandez
Carver Military Academy

Isabella Kelly
Ogden International High School

Jonah McArthur
Jones College Prep

Justin Meng
Northside College Prep

Layan Nazzari
Taft High School

Aaron Hardman
South Shore International

Yacqueline Chimal
Schurz High School

Tommy Hawkins
Englewood STEM High School

Tajiuna Cooper
Michele Clark High School

Lynn Britton Jr.
Curie High School

Juviel St.Clair Jr.
Lincoln Park High School

Micah Kohng
Whitney M. Young Magnet High School

Teen Health Council (THC)

Sebastian Alvarado
George Washington High School

Trinity Colón
George Washington High School

Freddie Foster
Simeon Career Academy High School

Stephanie Granobles
Whitney M. Young High School

A'Niaya Hall
Walter H. Dyett High School for the Arts

Emanuel Hernandez
Whitney M. Young High School

Teniola Idriss
Stephen Tyng Mather High School

Luis Jimbo
Noble Street College Prep

Zara Khan
Whitney M. Young High School

Ely Martinez
Victoria Soto Acero High School

Maximilian Matthes
Albert G. Lane Technical High School

Gremarianne Mosquera
Northside College Prep

Neveah Murff
Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz Acero High School

Madeline Oktem
Lakeview High School

Olivia Sepich
St. Ignatius College Preparatory

Myesha Skipper
George School of Newtown, PA

Kazi Stanton-Thomas
Latin School of Chicago

Yotzin Tzintzun
Benito Juarez Community Academy

Leyoni Williamson
William J. Bogan Computer Technical High School

Juvenile Justice Council (JJC)

Ahmad Herron
Brooks College Prep

Analise Juju Duarte
Ogden High School

Christopher Carter
Morgan Park High School

Christyana Arrington
UIC

Cristina Solano
Kelly High School

Daniela Perez
Back of the Yards College Prep

Fatima Mendoza
Hancock High School

Ja'Shawn Rozman
Simeon High School

Jalen Hunt
North Lawndale College Prep

Janiya Lanier
Westinghouse High School

Jesus Bakr
Mendota

Josue Rodriguez
North Grand High School

Layla Rodriguez
Lake View High School

Leo Smolensky
Lake View High School

Leonardo Jimenez
De La Salle Institute

Melony Esquivel
Lindblom High School

Micah Johnson
YCCS - Innovations

Octavio Montesdeoca
UIC

Samantha Parra
Roosevelt High School

Shaniya Williams
North-Grand High School

Xavieon Anderson
Morton West High School

Youth Safety Advisory Council (YSAC)

Ali Ngabo
Sullivan High School

Aysia James
Westinghouse High School

Baraa Mohammad
Roosevelt High School

Chance Stegall
Kenwood High School

Cristian Moreno
Chicago Academy High School

Daniel Zhang
Whitney Young High School

Destiny Phillips
Holy Trinity High School

Eric Garcia
Lane Tech High School

Erica Yang
Kelly High School

Jaida Morris
Kenwood High School

Jalen Grimes
Jones College Prep

Jayla Knighten
Westinghouse College Prep

Joshua Larrieux
Urban Prep - Bronzeville

LaNyia Rivers
Gage Park High School

Morgan New
Chicago High School for the Arts

Nina Pacheco
North-Grand High School

Rhomello Wellington
Noble - DRW

Ricardo Ramos
World Language High School

Shantell Knighten
Simeon Career Academy

Shelia Murphy
Holy Trinity High School

Vinh Huynh
Intrinsic High School

Juvenile Justice Council

The Juvenile Justice Council is a cohort of 24 young people ranging from the ages of 15-21. The Juvenile Justice Council strives to promote youth voice, advocate on behalf of those directly impacted by the juvenile justice system, and to promote a just and equitable society by advocating for restorative justice and fair reentry practices. Our recommendations reflect the thoughts and experiences of youth who have had direct touchpoints with the juvenile justice system, and focus on decreasing recidivism rates in youth, implementing trauma-informed practices, and cultivating holistic wraparound services in the juvenile court.



Summer Snapshot

This summer, the Juvenile Justice Council (JJC) worked to develop investment and legislative strategies for Cook County to develop alternatives to juvenile detention and prosecution. JJC hosted speakers from the Juvenile Probation Department, the Illinois State Legislature, the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission, and representatives from community-based organizations that function as alternatives to detention. JJC council members conducted in-depth research based on three sub-framing questions that centered on three issue areas: establishing a minimum age of detention for youth in the juvenile court system, in-system alternatives to detention and avoidance of prosecution, and community-based alternatives to detention.

JJC youth spoke with different professionals and juvenile justice advocates including:

- Savannah Felix, Legislative Coordinator, *Justice Advisory Council*
- Ali Abid, Deputy Director, *Justice Advisory Council*
- Senator Robert Peters, *Illinois State Congressman*
- Andrea Hall, Executive Director, *Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission*
- Karen Benita Reyes, Executive Director, *Firebird Community Arts*
- Elsa Guespe, Probation Officer, *Juvenile Probation & Court Services Dept.*
- Jeff Haynes, Probation Officer, *Juvenile Probation & Court Services Dept.*
- Dr. Asif Wilson, Dean of Instruction, *Harold Washington College*

Framing Question

In order to effectuate systemic change in the justice system, what legislative and investment strategies should Cook County pursue?

“I want to thank you again for all of your hard work. I appreciate the advice and support we’ve gotten from Mikva Challenge and from all of you on our criminal justice issues relating to young people. My staff will continue to work with you.”

— Toni Preckwinkle, *President of the Cook County Board of Commissioners*

“If you felt nervous, it’s because you have this ambition to be excellent, to be able to gift your insights.[...] You guys are creating a space that we need to be able to hear. We need to be able to do this well, so that’s quite a gift. I hope you understand and can feel that you’ve given us that present. And so you don’t have to be nervous - you can be excited that you can deliver such good, good stuff our way. [The policy recommendation presentation] was so well structured that it helped us get through a lot of information very effectively, so thank you so much for making that effort.”

— Avik Das, *Cook County Justice Advisory Council (JAC) Executive Director*

The Problem

Although the juvenile justice system is meant to be rehabilitative for justice-involved youth, in practice, it acts as a punitive institution. The current juvenile justice system lacks rehabilitative and community-based restoration efforts. In light of this, we have identified issue areas in the juvenile justice system that have adversely impacted young people in Cook County. Our recommendations will address potential investment strategies that Cook County could pursue to raise the minimum age of detention and prosecution for justice involved youth. We will also address providing community alternatives to detention for youth under the age of 14, which would mitigate youth being court and system involved. Our recommendations will address the following sub-framing questions:

- What investment strategies can Cook County invest in to raise the minimum age of detention and prosecution?
- What are community alternatives to detention and prosecution?
- What resources are needed to expand those alternatives so that youth under the age of 14 would not need to go to a detention center or be prosecuted?

Recommendation #1: Establishing A Minimum Age for Juvenile Detention

Cook County should establish 14 as a minimum age of criminal responsibility in juvenile delinquent court, prohibiting any arresting, charging, or convicting children under the age of 13. This establishment of a minimum age of criminal responsibility would, consequently, prevent youth from facing limitation in both competency to stand trial and culpability to receive age-appropriate response.

Why It's Important

Rational science and research of adolescent brain development reveal that frequent interactions with police and legal touchpoints at a young age can cause socio-emotional trauma that lasts into adulthood. The long-term impacts of being detained at a young age can adversely impact youth behavior and performance in different social and professional environments. According to the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, nearly half of the youth admitted to detention have presented unmet medical needs, and more than two-thirds have at least one psychiatric disorder. Moreover, one-third of detained youths have experienced “adverse childhood experiences.” Research from the “Journal of the American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry” also demonstrates the negative impact of detention on youth. A series of longitudinal analyses have revealed that youth detained before age 18 experience significant patterns of incarceration in adulthood,

In short, overall research suggests that what does work when it comes to supporting the development of children and adolescents who are in conflict with the law and keeping communities safe is not putting them into detention centers but implementing a combination of early intervention and multisystem programming aimed at providing coordinated interventions for children.

Minimizing Trauma from Police Encounters & its Effects on Mental Development

The frontal lobe is not fully developed in teen years. Changes within the brain that happen between youth make youthful individuals more impulsive, less able to create measured choices, and more helpless to peer pressure. Lawmakers and courts have paid interest in doing studies to analyze how adolescents are different from adults. Cases such as *Roper v. Simmons*, *Graham v. Florida*, and *Miller v. Alabama* collectively struck down the death penalty and mandatory life without parole for juveniles. However, less attention has been paid to the distinction between children and adolescents, and the ways individuals gradually change throughout childhood and adolescence. Therefore, the legal systems should respond to children in age-appropriate ways because the impacts they have on adolescent brain development are monumental.

The use of force and harsh language that police use to communicate with youths causes them to have emotional distress and trauma. According to research from the University of Texas at San Antonio, intrusive stops were defined by frisking, harsh language, searches, racial slurs, threats, and the use of force. The connection between features of police stops and youths’ emotional distress during the stop, social stigma after the stop, and post-traumatic stress after the stop is undeniably evident. Youth’s harsh interaction with the police can impact their ability to control their behavior, participate in legal proceedings, and understand formal juvenile justice system responses. Those who experienced

a high degree of officer intrusiveness have worsened their general health and have high emotional distress. Additionally, youths have to deal with various forms of authority and law enforcement entities. These establishments have historically practiced discriminatory and racist training policies.

School-to-Prison Pipeline

The school to prison pipeline is a process through which students are pushed out of school and into prison. In an effort to be tough on drugs and crime, we have begun criminalizing young people in schools through unreasonable disciplinary measures. These disciplinary measures contribute to high suspension/expulsion rates, lack of engagement in the classroom, and course materials. Evidence shows that the school-to-prison pipeline primarily captures and affects Black students, which mirrors the over-representation of this group in America's prisons and jails. Black students make up 75 percent of school linked arrests and are suspended or expelled 3 times more than white students. Students suspended or expelled are nearly 3 times more likely to be in contact with the juvenile justice system the following year.

Administrators rely heavily on police for surveillance — in the form of School Resource Officers (SROs) stationed in schools. From 1997 to 2007, the number of SROs increased by nearly a third, according to the Justice Policy Institute. When a school allows a School Resource Officer to arrest a student at a young age — or, less drastically and more commonly, refers a student to law enforcement or juvenile court as a form of discipline — they're turning that student over to the juvenile justice system. That makes it that much easier for a student to get a juvenile record. A report by the Justice Policy Institute found that, even controlling for a school district's poverty level, schools with officers had five times as many arrests for "disorderly conduct" as schools without them.

Trauma-Informed Practices

Trauma-informed practices are methods of treatment, acknowledgment, and care. Methods of treatment regarding trauma are informed practices are recognizing the effects of trauma, recognizing how trauma can affect all individuals, and proper response to trauma. The five most known principles for guiding and healing trauma are safety, choice, collaboration, trust, and empowerment.

In juvenile justice programs, models are designed to assist involving advanced coping strategies, improve problem-solving, and implement positive self-correction skills rather than simply punitive responses for justice-involved youth (Skinner-Osei & Levenson, 2018; Levenson, 2019). Specifically, assessments of childhood trauma and related mental health needs are essential in providing appropriate care for justice-involved youth and potentially increasing the success of the juvenile justice system in preventing recidivism. Although research has shown that training and resources for trauma-informed practices are significant, policymakers still disconnect from providing adequate funding and resources.

Notable Research

MacArthur Foundation Research Network on Adolescent Development and Juvenile Justice found that children and adolescents age 15 and under have not fully developed the ability to recognize the risks inherent in different choices and to think about the long-term consequences of their actions. Furthermore, *“juveniles aged 15 and younger are significantly more likely than older adolescents and young adults to be impaired in ways that compromise their ability to serve as competent defendants in a criminal proceeding.”*

(Thomas, 2003)

Data from the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority shows that children under age 14 are arrested at comparatively low rates, particularly for the most serious felonies. Moreover, children between the ages of 10 and 13 years only accounted for 9 percent of juvenile felony arrests in Illinois in 2018. For the most serious classes of felonies, children between the ages of 10 and 13 accounted for only 6.4 percent of juvenile arrests.

(Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, 2018)

Loyola University Chicago Legislation & Policy Clinic Analysis found that children under age 14 who are arrested in Illinois are disproportionately likely to be African American. In fact, black adolescents make up 53.5 percent of arrests of 14 through 17-year-olds, and make up 62.2 percent of arrests of children ages 10 through 13, despite being 15% of the population of 10-17 year olds in Illinois.

(Loyola University Chicago, 2018)

Currently, in the United States, twenty-two states currently have a minimum age of criminal responsibility. Notably, in 2018, California and Massachusetts both set 12 as their minimum age, and in 2020, Utah joined them in setting a minimum age of 12. Internationally, The Child Rights International Network states that the United Nations has encouraged countries to set 14 as their minimum age of criminal responsibility, and 118 countries have set a minimum age of 12 or higher.

(Children's Rights International Network)

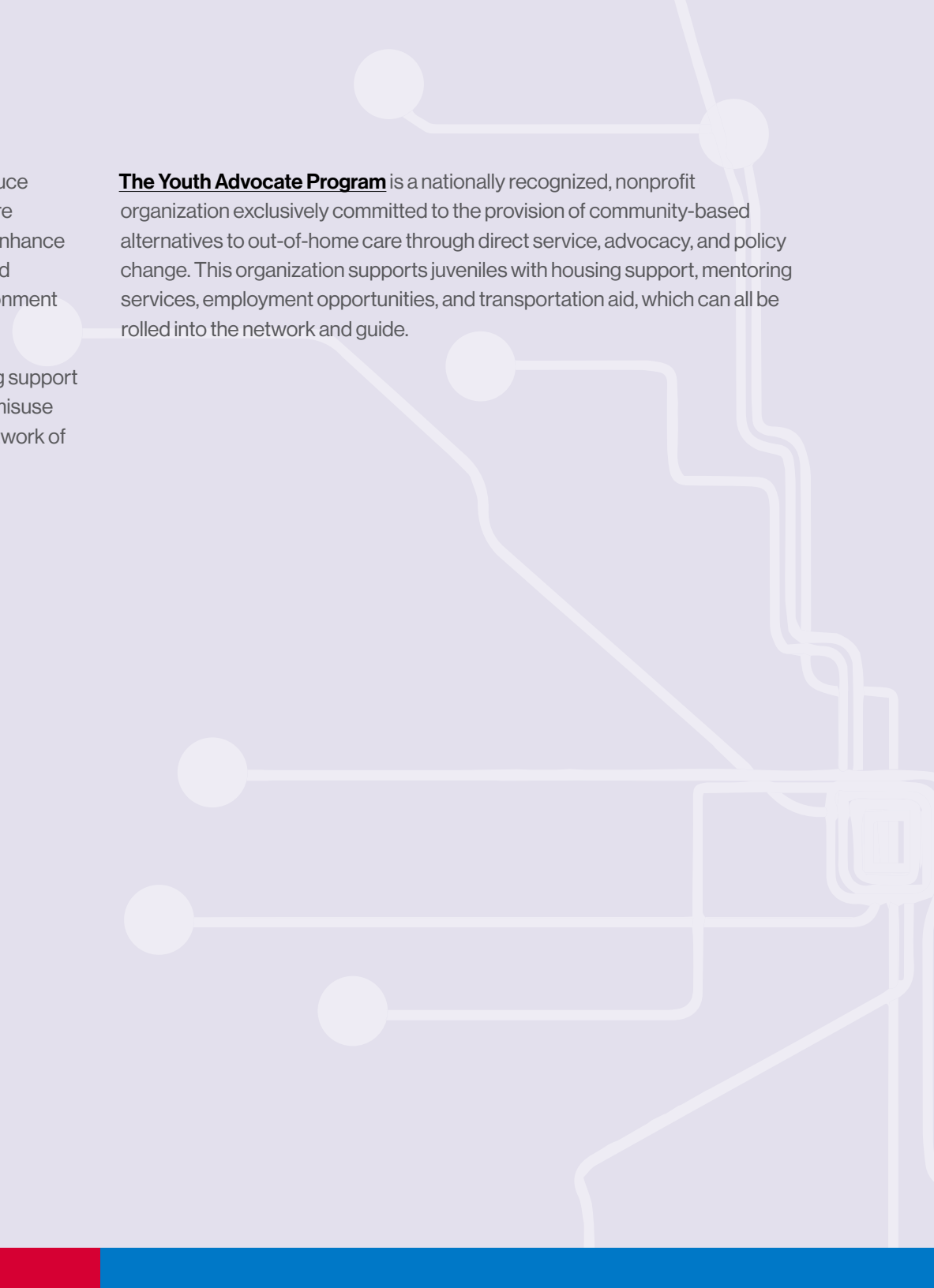
Juvenile court makes me feel angry because I know I messed up if I end up there. I don't think minors should be arrested at fourteen [...] because at fourteen years old, your mind is not fully developed and [adults] don't know what this 14 year old could have been going through. — Jalen Hunt, Council Member

Action Steps

The Justice Advisory Council and the Office of the Cook County Board President Preckwinkle should develop a commission composed of youth representatives from various community organizations, non-profit organizations, young people who have touchpoints with the juvenile justice system, and advocates for youth. This group of students would have the opportunity to see the Board's policymakers in action and work with them to provide youth perspectives and concerns on the city's juvenile criminalization policies. The youth commission meets once a week and works on a research project presented to the Board once a month. Ideally, this position is paid using the Cook County Equity Fund or American Rescue Plan funds. And ultimately, youths should know how to draft a bill, write a testimony, and testify in front of committees.

Potential Partnerships

The Justice Advisory Council's mission is to work collaboratively with key stakeholders in the County's criminal and juvenile justice system to reduce the population of the Cook County Jail and Juvenile Temporary Detention Center. Since they work alongside stakeholders that hold a certain influence, they can help to bring in people with a background of working with youth.



Illinois Justice Project (ILJP) advances policies and practices that reduce violence, decrease prison recidivism and make the justice system more equitable. Particularly, their Department of Juvenile Justice works to enhance public safety and positive youth outcomes by providing strength based individualized services to youth in a safe learning and treatment environment so that they may successfully reintegrate into their communities.

The Safety and Justice Challenge's mission centers around providing support to local leaders across the country who are determined to tackle the misuse and overuse of jails. The Safety and Justice Challenge has a broad network of sites across the country, all working for prison reform.

The Youth Advocate Program is a nationally recognized, nonprofit organization exclusively committed to the provision of community-based alternatives to out-of-home care through direct service, advocacy, and policy change. This organization supports juveniles with housing support, mentoring services, employment opportunities, and transportation aid, which can all be rolled into the network and guide.

Recommendation #2: Expansion of the Restorative Justice Community Courts

The current restorative justice courts in Cook County only service offenders between the ages of 18 and 26. We recommend that Cook County expand the scope of the Restorative Justice Community Courts to include juvenile offenders under the age of 18 who are charged with both nonviolent and violent crimes. Additionally, current Restorative Justice Courts are only located in Avondale, North Lawndale, and Englewood. The County should expand the extended restorative justice courts into all six Cook County court municipalities.

Why it's Important

Although the current model for juvenile delinquent court focuses on the rehabilitation of court-involved youth, the juvenile justice system is not very rehabilitative in practice. Current Juvenile Justice Council members who have had touchpoints with the justice system identify it as more punitive than rehabilitative. Of juvenile state attorneys and juvenile court judges, they have said “they don’t identify you as a young person; they aren’t trying to help you. In court, the judge picks on your flaws more than they try to help you.” Justice involved young people have also articulated that youth do not get the adequate help they need in order to transition out of system involvement. Instead, adults in the juvenile court are “expecting them to commit crimes again.” The current rehabilitative model for the juvenile justice system is not working for the youth within the system, and youth deserve to have communities of care that do not punish them, but rather offer them a holistic approach to self and community restoration.

The expansion of the Restorative Justice Courts in Cook County to the juvenile court would provide young people with an alternative to criminal prosecution that not only has an emphasis on rehabilitation, but also on community restoration. This would mitigate carceral options for youth such as electronic monitoring/house arrest, probation, temporary and long-term juvenile detention facilities, and adult jail. Instead of using punitive methods in an effort to rehabilitate juvenile offenders, the expanded restorative justice courts would

provide a space for community restoration while also focusing on accountability.

Unlike the current Restorative Justice Community Court models, the Juvenile Restorative Justice Community Court should act as a deflection point from the juvenile justice system for youth charged with both nonviolent and violent crimes. In March 2021, the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission reported that 22 percent of all admissions into juvenile temporary detention centers statewide were youth charged with violent crimes. In that same month, of the 147 youth admitted to the Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center, 89 were charged with a violent crime. The expansion of the restorative justice court that is currently restrictive, limiting in its eligibility criteria, only means that a large portion of Cook County’s youth offenders are left out of the restorative justice model.

Expanding the court’s geographic scope to include communities outside of North Lawndale, Avondale, and Englewood allows youth from every community to feel comfortable navigating through their neighborhoods safely. Oftentimes, unnecessary travel conflicts and fear of violence discourage young people from attending programs that can actually help them. Restorative Justice Courts must be responsive to youth and having a court in every community ensures that the county is making strides towards a youth-responsive, holistic approach to the rehabilitation of justice-involved youth.

Notable Research

In a study on the effectiveness of restorative justice practices, researchers from the Department of Justice Canada and Carleton University found that participation in a restorative justice program resulted in higher victim satisfaction ratings in the follow-up period. Additionally, researchers found that restorative justice programs, on average, yielded reductions in recidivism compared to non-restorative approaches to criminal behavior, and participants in restorative justice programs were more successful during follow-ups than offenders in the penal system (Jeff Latimer, Craig Dowden, Danielle Muise, 2005).

New York's Red Hook Community Justice Center — a restorative justice court in Brooklyn — has found that adults served by the court have a recidivism rate that is 10% lower than for those in the traditional court system. Among juveniles, it was 20% lower (Chicago Sun Times, 2020).

In 2013, the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority found that over 90 percent of victims and offenders across the United States would recommend restorative conferencing to others. 93 percent of participating victims said that meeting the offender was helpful and 100 percent of participating offenders saying that meeting with the victims was helpful, particularly in increasing confidence in the justice system and restoring relationships in the community (Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, 2013).

As of November 2020, of the 63 participants who have completed and graduated from North Lawndale's restorative justice court, none of them have committed another crime since their completion of the program — Judge Patricia Spratt, North Lawndale Restorative Justice Community Court (Chicago Tribune, 2020).

“After extensive preparation, responsible parties sit with those they have harmed (or surrogates who take their place), people who support both parties, and a trained facilitator in a restorative justice “circle.” This circle provides those most affected by a crime with the power and opportunity to address questions, impacts, needs, and obligations, in order to heal and foster accountability. Together the circle participants reach agreements about what the responsible party can do to make things as right as possible” (Common Justice New York, 2021).

- In her 2019 book, *Until We Reckon*, founder of Common Justice New York Danielle Sered asserts that the American justice system does not provide the support that victims and offenders need to reckon with and heal from crime. She argues that survivors of violence not only need to see people held accountable for the harm perpetrated against them, but that they also express the desire to 1) ensure that perpetrators of violence further inflict harm on others, 2) get an apology and acknowledgment of harm from the offender, and 3) have interpersonal conversations between themselves and those who have caused harm to them (Serred, *Until We Reckon*, 2019).

Action Steps

The Restorative Justice model of the juvenile court would follow the model of the existing Restorative Justice Courts in that a young person charged must:

- be a resident of the neighborhood of their respective court.
 - If a young person is uncomfortable with attending the restorative justice court located in their community, they should reserve the right to petition for a transfer to another restorative justice court in a community they are comfortable in if the court deems it feasible.
- accept responsibility for the harm caused and
- The person charged and person(s) harmed must be willing to participate in the Restorative Justice Court.

The Juvenile Restorative Justice Court should operate using peace circles to create a **Repair of Harm Agreement**, which is a legal document establishing the requirements for repairing harm to the community. Once the Repair of Harm Agreement requirements is met, the youth's case will be dismissed. Participants of the peace circles should include:

- A guardian/trusted adult of the youth offender
- Crisis manager/counselor
- Recipient of harm
- Attorney for the youth charged
- Trained restorative justice facilitator/practitioner

In addition to the completion of the Repair of Harm Agreement, the peace circles should also integrate community-building activities and narrative-based conversation in order to enhance the understanding of both parties' experiences and the cause of the offense, and to identify the most effective preventative measures for harm reduction in the community. Everything shared in the peace circle should be protected by ILSB0064 which keeps what is shared in restorative justice court from being shared in a traditional criminal court. Youth in the Juvenile Restorative Justice Court should be offered a variety of services which include mental health counseling, substance abuse treatment, education resources, and job training programs. The court should be in operation Monday through Friday.

Recommendation #3:

Cook County is nationally and historically a hub for juvenile justice reform. The Juvenile Justice Council recommends that Cook County invest funds into the current networks of existing community programs as an extension of its alternatives to detention initiative.

Why it's Important

We recommend incorporating community alternatives that utilize restorative and rehabilitative practices, and offer stipends as an incentive for youth to attend those programs. Providing community alternatives to children under the age of 14 would mitigate youth being court and system involved to begin with.

According to Asif Wilson, the Associate Dean of Instruction at Harold Washington College, community organizations should create a space where youth can mobilize and act on issues that directly impact them. Giving youth that agency would encourage them to find their roles and purposes in their respective communities. It would also allow them to be unapologetic about their voices and be comfortable finding solutions to identified problems. This way, they are liberated from the restrictive electronic monitoring system and allow them to experience new things and have fun.

Action Steps

The Juvenile Justice Council has met with different community leaders/ organizations and juvenile justice professionals throughout the Mikva Challenge 2021 Citywide Youth Council think tank summer. Based on the information gathered, the Juvenile Justice Council identified programs that have been dedicated to holistically addressing the social-emotional needs of youth, cultivating transformative relationships, and youth-centered restorative justice methods with a diversity, equity and social justice lens for all demographics of young people.

Social Services

To address the most fundamental needs of youth, we believe that special

attention should be given primarily to public social services that are already provided by the County and state. We believe that although these systems already exist, they are difficult to navigate. Youth that are involved in the justice system need various wraparound services. Many court impacted youth have adverse childhood experiences with trusting adults and establishing routines like communication. Taking this into consideration, we believe that youth support services should encompass holistic models and support youth throughout their entire process. "Many young people experience homelessness from an early age. This strains the family dynamic and young people aren't able to recover from that," says Andrea Hall, director of the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission. The Juvenile Justice Council would like to bring to the forefront current programs and policies that cultivate community and familial services. Support services like drug rehabilitation, harm reduction, suicide prevention, sex education programs, and mental health services provide youth with the opportunity to recover from past experiences. These programs should have a focus on creating the most inclusive spaces possible for youth that highlight diversity and equity across all spectrums of the human experience. Youth who are gender non-conforming, LGBTQ+, BIPOC, experience discrimination at a higher rate and require spaces that can advocate for marginalized peoples rights. The following are examples of existing programs that Cook County could further invest in:

- Youth Outreach Services
- IDHS Teen Reach
- Comprehensive Community Based Youth Services (CCBYS)
- BUILD
- Westside Health Authority

Evening Reporting Centers

As an already existing investment, Cook County could discuss the expansion of Evening Reporting Centers. This would be a great opportunity to support justice-involved young people. After gaining more information about the ERCs we've seen that they do offer different locations and services in different areas including the Cook County Suburbs. After speaking with ERC Supervisor, Detrice Ivy, the program accepts all demographics of youth. Juvenile Probation Officers offer both on-site and zoom programming once a week. Programming and content is intended for youth to still be able to experience the joys and innocence of childhood. Chess, poetry, and field trips to Chicago landmarks are all offered within evening reporting centers with the option of being in person with transportation and food being provided. We believe that programs like this provide great incentives for youth to return and youth often do not want to leave the centers once they have built a bond. However, since attending ERCs is mandated by judge adjudication, youth do not have the option to remain in attendance at the reporting center. Young people should reserve the right to remain in the ERC programming once their mandated reporting period ends. Evening Reporting Centers also only operate between the hours of 4p-8pm. We recommend that ERCs be in operation during regular business hours on weekdays, as well 9am-3pm on the weekends.

Creative & Multicultural Arts

The Juvenile Justice Council believes that young people want to be able to live their own lives and establish their own sense of identity. We believe that through personal healing youth can feel more comfortable making better decisions which enhances their overall well-being. Youth expression through artistic and creative means is the key to exploring and unlocking the potential that can be cultivated into long-term social, economic, and professional benefits that create

a sense of overall belonging in the community. Community, to the JJC does not simply refer to a geographic place, but is an environment that is created by multiple intersections of various personal identities.

These alternatives to detention and prosecution would look like art programs such as Firebird Community Arts. They serve 3 hours of art and one hour of co-facilitated trauma-informed support groups. This model of $\frac{3}{4}$ activity and $\frac{1}{4}$ support groups is a way for participants to connect with other youth facing the same struggles and provide safe relationships with older youth and adults. If implemented into the juvenile justice system this could serve as a re-entry service that provides smoother transitions for youth.

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Neighborhood Leadership Initiative

Neighborhood Leadership Initiative (NLI) is a community-based program dedicated to youth ages 13 to 15 from the North Lawndale, Gage Park, and New City/Back of the Yards communities. We focus on researching the violence that they experience in their community, building leadership skills, developing youth-led safety strategies to take action on public safety initiatives, and connecting youth to local stakeholders and officials.

Councils' Summer Goal

To have successful youth-led community clean-ups and campaigns about neighborhood violence and public safety

Snapshot 1: Community Clean-Ups & Restorative Justice

Received a Restorative Justice Training from the Metropolitan Peace Academy and undertook 5 community clean-ups at Morrill Elementary School in Gage Park, Douglass Park in North Lawndale, and Sherman Park in New City / Back of the Yards.

Snapshot 2: Community Safety Campaign

Placed the youth-created Top Ten Tips for Navigating Community and NLI's Collective Vision of Safety throughout the parks so community members can participate in the public safety campaign.

Snapshot 3: Stakeholder Meetings

Met with 16th Ward Alderman Stephanie D. Coleman, 24th Ward Alderman Michael Scott, Jr, and the Chicago Police Department 9th District District Coordination Officers (DCO) to participate in a learning exchange about community leadership.

>>> Top 10 Tips for <<<

Navigating your Neighborhood

1. **Know your surroundings** and be aware of the crime in your area



2. **Build relationships** with businesses and other trusted adults to help you advocate for your needs



3. **Have a "Safe Spot"** where you and your family can go, if needed



4. **Surround yourself** with good-hearted, positive people



5. **Let people know** where you're going and when you get there. Share and keep your location on



6. **Know your way around** your community and identify safe streets to walk through



7. **Travel in groups**, especially at night



8. **Stay away from dangerous situations**, especially if you don't have control over them



9. **If cat-called or verbally harassed, don't engage.** Inform a trusted adult about the encounter



10. **Remain calm to the best of your ability during police encounters.** If officers ask questions, you only have to provide your name, age, address, and date of birth



 **DFSS**
Department of Family and Support Services

Mikva
Challenge IL

“You can’t wait for someone else to do something that you can do yourselves. Don’t let anybody tell you that just because you’re in 8th grade or in high school that you can’t have a voice.” — 24th Ward Alderman Michael Scott, Jr.

“If we show our community love now, if we invest in young people now, we will have better success in having a safer Chicago, a safer Gage Park, a safer Englewood. Young people, your voices are so necessary and so important. I want to encourage you to keep advocating, keep working hard. Someone is listening, someone sees you, someone is there for you. And that someone is me!” — 16th Ward Alderman Stephanie Coleman

Thank you!

We are especially grateful to the generous champions and donors of Mikva Challenge. Thanks to the investment of individual donors, foundations, companies, non-profits, government, and other organizations, we are able to uplift the visions, voices and leadership of young people — reaching thousands of youth across Chicago. Our transformational impact is only possible through this support.

Mikva Challenge is grateful to institutions for giving youth a seat at the decision-making table. Our youth have advised various government agencies across Chicago including the Office of the Cook County Board President, Chicago Public Schools, the Chicago Police Department's Independent Monitoring Team, the Chicago Department of Public Health, the Chicago Police Department's 9th District Coordinating Officers, 16th Ward Alderman Stephanie Coleman, and 24th Ward Alderman Michael Scott, Jr..

Our programs are also made robust by our relationships with many other leading agencies across Chicago. A special thank you to the Mayor's Office One Summer Chicago (OSC) program and the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services (DFSS) for providing employment and internship opportunities to our youth.

We are grateful to organizations including Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission (IJJC), Firebird Community Arts, Lurie Children's Hospital, the office of Senator Robert Peters, Civilian Office of Police Accountability (COPA) and ICAN! Illinois Contraceptive Access Now, to name a few. Mikva Challenge youth often work closely with these and other organizations to support youth-led projects. These partnerships not only give Mikva Challenge participants access to resources but also access to a network of influential decision-makers throughout the city. Thank you for championing our work while opening many avenues of opportunity for the young people in our programs.

To all of our State of Chicago Youth Town Hall attendees, thank you for partnering with Mikva Challenge to make Chicago one of the nation's preeminent cities to empower, elevate, and strengthen youth voice!

The State of Chicago Youth Town Hall is the sum of collective knowledge, insight and perspectives shared. We would like to express our gratitude to all the people and groups that made this critical work possible, including: Mikva Challenge Staff: Verneé Green, Juleny Santa Cruz, James Fields, Carla Ruvalcaba, Riyan Jones, Larry Dean, Jazmin Ocampo, Crystal Ortiz, Barbara Cruz, Meghan Goldenstein, Mia Salamone, veronica bohanan, Jamie Dillon, Zafiro Aguilar, and all other interns and support staff.

