

# 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**

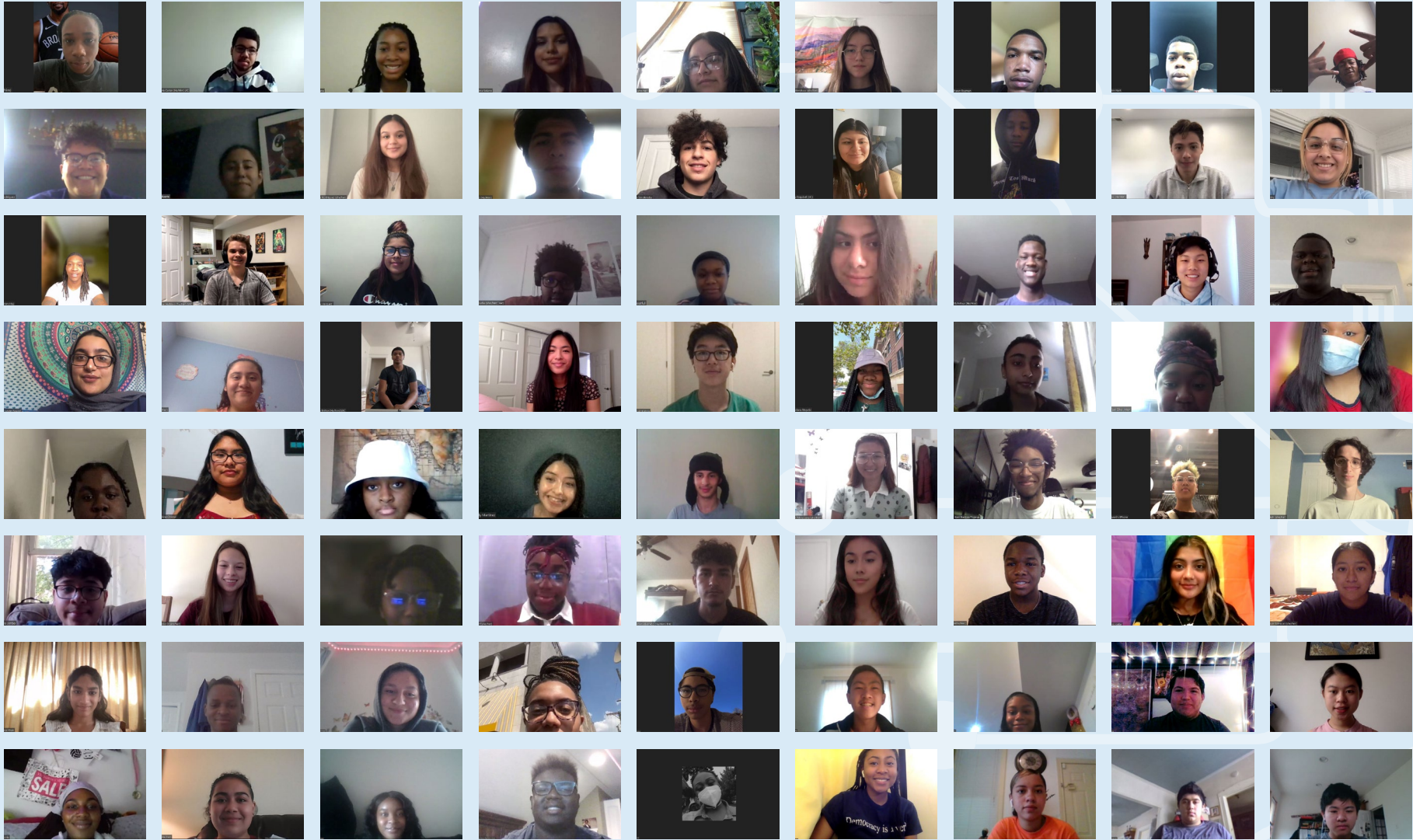
To develop youth to be empowered, informed, and active citizens who will promote a just and equitable society.

### **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](https://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

**ANiaya 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

**LaNya 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

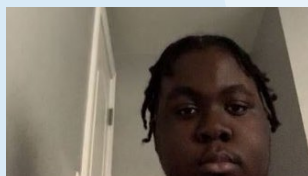
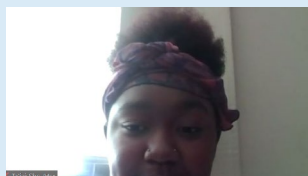
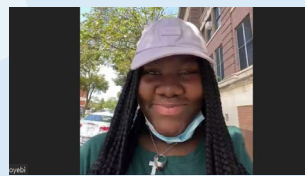
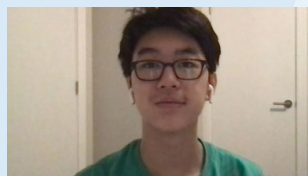
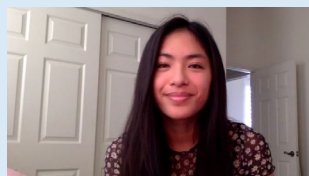
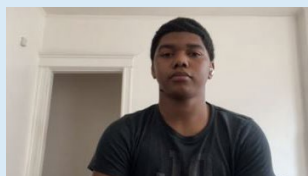
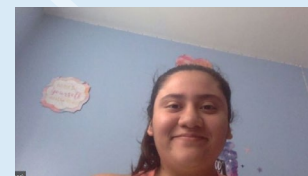
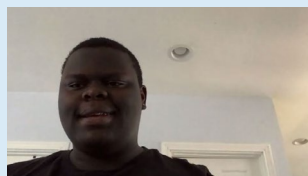
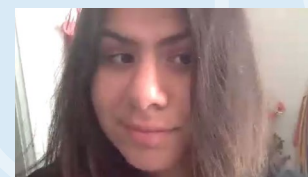
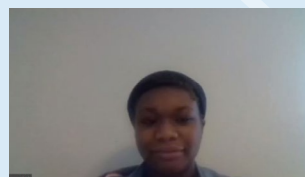
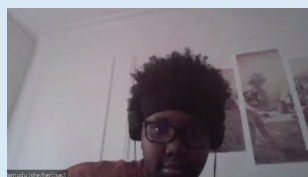
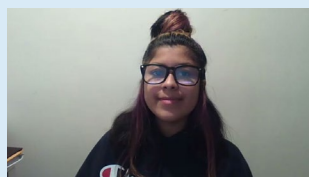
# Recommendation Summary

<b>CPS Student Advisory Council (SAC)</b>	<b>Teen Health Council (THC)</b>	<b>Juvenile Justice Council (JJC)</b>	<b>Youth Safety Advisory Council (YSAC)</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Student Feedback in CPS Curriculum</li> <li>- Centering Student Experiences in School Quality Ratings</li> <li>- Know Your Rights, Adult Accountability, and the Student Code of Conduct</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- COVID-19 Vaccine Campaign, By Teens, For Teens</li> <li>- Student Feedback for CPS' Suicide Prevention Policy Draft</li> <li>- Launching a student-led campaign to inform youth about their sexual health rights</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Establishing minimum age for Juvenile Detention</li> <li>- Expanding of the Restorative Justice Court</li> <li>- Community Alternatives to Detention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Launching a Youth Engagement Strategy</li> <li>- Consent Decree Curriculum</li> <li>- Conducting ShotSpotter Audit</li> </ul>



# CPS Student Advisory Council

The CPS Student Advisory Council (SAC) is composed of Chicago Public School students representing 22 different schools from across the city who are passionate about education and are committed to improving CPS schools. Students focus on district policy and on areas selected in partnership with the CEO and other district leadership, meeting regularly to inform and develop solutions and policy recommendations. They conduct research and analysis throughout the year, and advocate for policy solutions that will equitably impact students district-wide and further create a transparent CPS through inclusive partnerships.




## Summer Snapshot

This summer, SAC continued previous work that focuses on cultivating an equity lens to advise on the district's policies and initiatives. In meetings with the district leaders, such as the CPS Office of Equity, the Department of Curriculum Instruction and Digital Learning (CIDL), the Office of Social Emotional Learning (OSEL), and the Director of School Quality Rating Policy (SQRP) students unpacked CPS' core values and goals and explored the crucial role that equity plays in creating pathways for student input in decision-making. Working closely with district leaders, students explored how to build on the work around student voice and equity by focusing on their 3 key issue areas:

- **Curriculum Equity Initiative (CEI)** to ensure that students across the district equitably receive quality instruction and have space to provide feedback on curriculum.
- **Student Code of Conduct (SCC)** to provide insight to how the policy and implementation of the SCC can empower students and prevent the reinforcement of disproportionate treatment based on race, learning differences, etc.
- **School Quality Rating Policy (SQRP)** to advise on the policy changes that strive towards a more holistic approach to rating school quality.

## Framing Question

**How might youth perspective inform and improve CPS District policy, priorities, and decisions in order to achieve the district vision goals?**



*“I’m so grateful for the time and commitment these young people have made to our district and our city. Their questions, reflections, and feedback are critical to our work, and we are certainly stronger because of their leadership.”*

—Heather Van Benthuyzen, Executive Director, Department of Social Science and Civic Engagement, Chicago Public Schools

# Recommendation #1: Student Feedback in CPS Curriculum

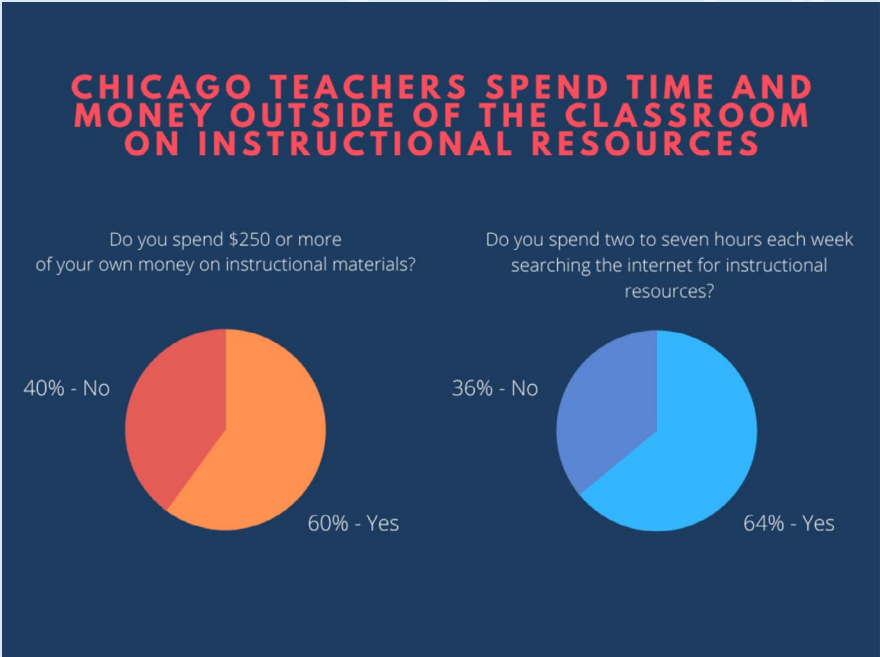
In order for students to have a level of agency over their education, students will work with the Curriculum, Instruction, Digital Learning (CIDL) Department to develop an infrastructure for student input on the lessons in the CPS's new Skyline curriculum. Student feedback on curriculum should be solicited and considered to empower students and enable their active participation in their own education. Student input and feedback on Skyline lessons should directly inform improvements and the quality of the curriculum and its implementation districtwide in SY22.

## Why it's Important

As the new curriculum “was launched to ensure every student in every school has access to a high-quality curriculum that engages their interests and celebrates their diversity,” students should be a key stakeholder in evaluating its effectiveness, as they are the ones receiving the instruction. With student feedback, teachers will be able to identify whether the curriculum is working for each student. Consistent and authentic student input will strengthen the effectiveness and impact of the curriculum overall and allow for a more democratic experience in the classroom that promotes diversity and inclusion.

## Notable Research

- “About 64 percent of Chicago teachers surveyed said they spend between two and seven hours each week searching the internet for instructional resources, and nearly 60 percent say they spend \$250 or more of their own money on instructional materials.”
- “Evaluation teams comprised of teachers, content experts and district staff, made recommendations about the vendors, according to the district.” As the largest CPS stakeholder, students should be able to weigh in on how the curriculum gets rolled out.



## Action Steps

**Action Step 1: Create visibility for students to know where the curriculum** is being implemented and identify schools/teachers who opt-in and implement Skyline

**Action Step 2: Mock Skyline for SAC to test the student rubric**

- Use the rubric that last year's SAC created to provide feedback, and then refine or make any edits to the rubric. Improve the process in which students receive the rubric for efficiently providing feedback to teachers on their curriculum.

**Action Step 3: Disseminate student rubric and feedback form**

- Improve the process in which students receive the rubric for efficiently providing feedback to teachers on their curriculum. There should be a monthly incentive for students to submit feedback and should be continuously used to modify the curriculum. A designated person will need to be appointed to work in partnership with students to create a feedback review process.

## Potential Partnerships

Curriculum, Instruction, and Digital Learning (CIDL) Department of Chicago Public Schools

# Recommendation #2: Centering Student Experiences in School Quality Ratings

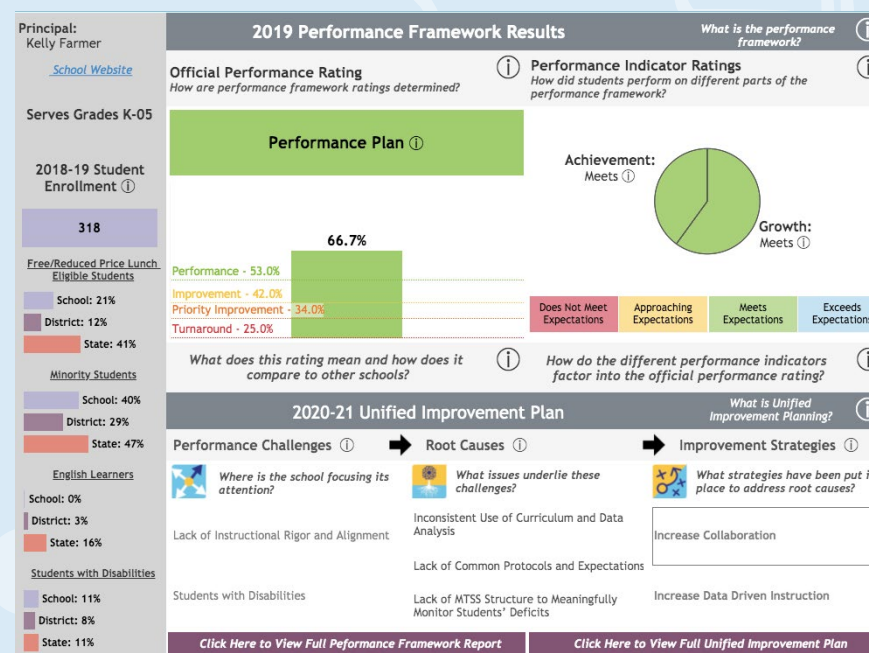
The School Quality Rating Policy (SQRP) plans to have policy changes in April of 2021 and our goal is to ensure that the new SQRP includes student input that can further show qualitative experiences, not just numerical. We plan to participate in Stakeholder Engagement Design Team (SEDТ) meetings and continue providing student representation and participation on the Advisory Group. We want to make sure that school environment, student safety, and student experiences are included in the new SQRP policy changes. SAC will review SQRP proposals before they are presented to the Advisory Group to ensure student input is consistent. We plan to help create accountability for all stakeholders such as students, parents, teachers, school admin, CPS policy makers and community leaders.

## Why it's Important

According to data from focus groups conducted by SEDТ, CPS stakeholders expressed that challenges to the current SQRP include feeling punitive for some, and not having an equitable impact on all schools. For example, principals reported that grant makers and partners are unwilling to invest in schools with declining scores or ranked below a 1. This purely quantitative rating policy inhibits a holistic perspective of schools, and can destabilize some schools by penalizing underperforming schools causing them to lose funding. On the contrary, the rating of schools should be a tool that enables more equitable support for the challenges that schools may face.

## Notable Research

- According to a case study on Denver Public School (DPS), they have intentionally tracked the progress of students of color, students with disabilities and low income students, to better keep schools accountable for educating all students and closing the color and equity gap. The screenshot below displays an example of a school summary of data that breaks down achievement, growth, performance challenges, root causes, and improvement strategies.



- Arts integration improving schools academics it shows that arts can improve schools rather than just students enjoying school

**Table 6**  
*MSA Scores from Bates Middle School and Control School*

Grade	Bates					Control School				
	SY 2009		SY 2012		Δ	SY 2009		SY 2012		Δ
	N	P+	N	P+		N	P+	N	P+	
<b>Reading</b>										
6	168	75.0	242	82.7	+7.7	210	77.1	204	75.5	-1.6
7	159	64.8	257	81.4	+16.6	242	76.4	237	72.2	-4.2
8	183	78.1	204	78.9	+0.8	241	77.2	220	73.2	-4.0
<b>Mathematics</b>										
6	167	59.3	243	83.1	+23.8	209	72.2	204	64.2	-8.0
7	159	60.4	258	81.0	+20.6	240	62.5	236	74.2	+11.7
8	184	64.7	204	68.1	+3.4	240	67.9	220	58.2	-9.7

*N* = number of students taking the test      *P+* = percentage of students at or above proficient  
*Δ* = difference in the percentage of students scoring at or above proficient between 2009 and 2012.

Reference/link: <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1050605>

Based on Massachusetts Quality Rating and Improvement System (MA QRIS) Policy Guide, States with high ratings already grade with other aspects along with a numbers based system and have handbooks we can reference.



## Action Steps

### **Action Step 1: SAC reviews proposals before they're presented to the Advisory Group**

- To get a better idea on how our sub-committee can help improve the SQRP.
- Give any helpful feedback from the student perspective.
- Plan time periods for review during the 2021 school year.

### **Action Step 2: SAC students participate in SEDT meetings and advise on stakeholder engagement work**

- To tie our work together with SEDT.
- To push for measures that showcase school environment, student safety, and student experiences in the SQRP.
- To ensure that all student input from schools of all levels 1+ to 3 have input in the process.

### **Action Step 3: Further Researching Arts Integration**

- Look more into how the arts affect students' sense of belonging.
- Research the possibility of including arts integration in the new SQRP system for qualitative data
- Analyze data from SEDT meetings around significance of arts to stakeholders

## Potential Partnerships

Jeff Broom, SQRP Advisory Group, Stakeholder Engagement Design Team (SEDT), Office of Equity, CPS Department of Arts



## Recommendation #3: Know Your Rights, Adult Accountability, and the Student Code of Conduct

School suspensions have decreased, but Black male students are still suspended more often than their Latino and white peers. In collaboration with the Office of Social Emotional Learning (OSEL), we've been able to revise the Student Code of Conduct (SCC) in order to reduce bias in how policies get carried out. But many students still don't know what the SCC is. With students not knowing about the SCC, they don't know they can refute charges or when their rights are violated. Our goal is to ensure that students are aware of their rights and of the policy changes made to the SCC.

### Why it's Important

Inequities in discipline practices put certain students, particularly Black students and students with disabilities, at higher risk for negative life outcomes, including involvement in the criminal justice system. The inequities in disciplinary practices disproportionately affect these students and their education. As the largest CPS stakeholder, students are most affected by the language and in the SCC and by how the SCC gets interpreted and enforced. Being more intentional with how students learn about their rights, coupled with creating more adult accountability, is needed to prevent student rights from being violated, which reinforces a school to prison pipeline.

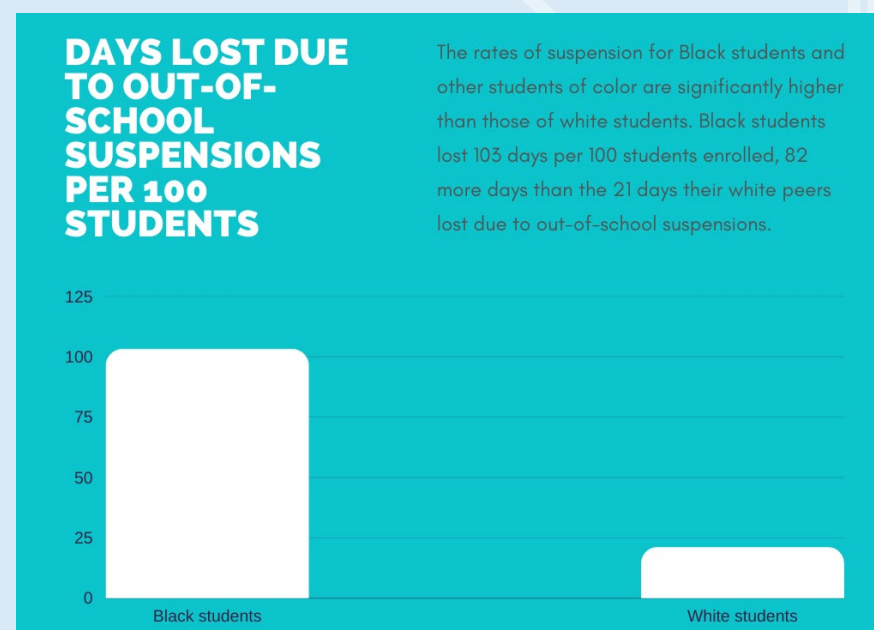
### Notable Research

Research that shows how disciplinary measures affect certain groups:

- "Students assigned to a school with a one standard deviation higher suspension rate are 15–20% more likely to be arrested and incarcerated as adults and were also less likely to attend a four-year college."
- "Education professionals should be cautious of relying heavily on exclusionary practices. A strict school climate negatively impacts long-run outcomes — educational attainment, arrests, and incarceration rates — for the overall student body."

<https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/19/09/school-discipline-linked-later-consequences#:~:tex>

- "The rates for Black students and other students of color are significantly higher than those of white students. Black students lost 103 days per 100 students enrolled, 82 more days than the 21 days their white peers lost due to out-of-school suspensions."



## Action Steps

### **Action Step 1: SAC analyze and understand the updated protocol**

- Look for examples of criminalizing language within the text. Gauge how effective the current harassment policies are in 2021 and determine through a student feedback process whether they need to be revised in order to encompass all types of harassment.

### **Action Step 2: “Know Your Rights” Campaign**

- Disseminate information via social media, so students can be informed of the Student Bill of Rights and of the changes made to the SCC

### **Action Step 3: Ensuring Accountability**

- SAC and OSEL can collaborate on creating optional training for school personnel around the Student Code of Conduct. SAC can advise and provide feedback on trainings in the fields of Restorative Anti-bias work in order to encourage school staff to maintain positive relationships with students.

## Potential Partnerships

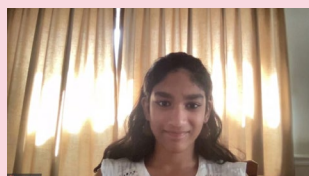
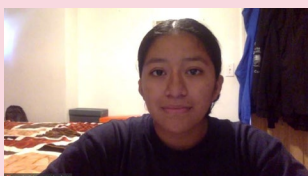
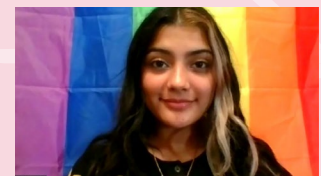
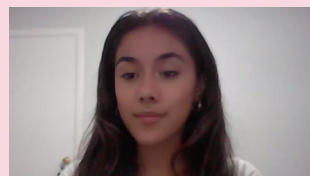
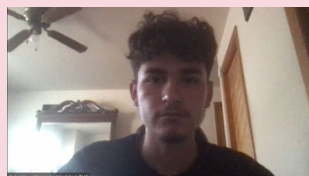
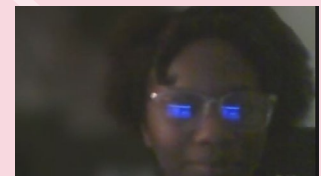
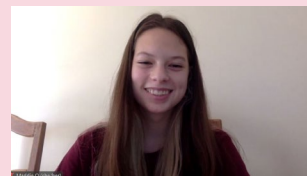
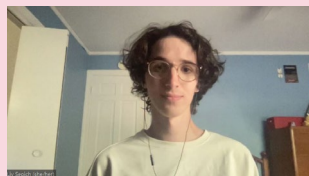
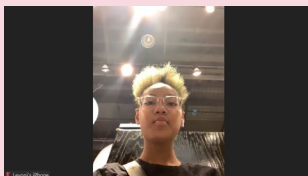
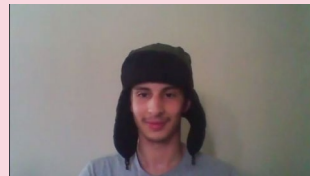
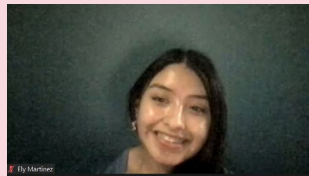
Office of Social Emotional Learning (OSEL), the Juvenile Justice Council (JJC), collaborate with Student Voice Committees and the Student Voice and Activism Fellows (SVAF)

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# Teen Health Council

In partnership with the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) Office of Student Health and Wellness (OSHW), the Teen Health Council advises policies that affect the state of health and healthcare for teens across Chicago. With special attention to sexual health policy in CPS, mental health resources, and COVID-19 safety, the Teen Health Council strives to create a more equitable health environment for teens across Chicago by addressing disparities in policy.




## Summer Snapshot

The Teen Health Council (THC) is a group of Chicago youth (ages 16-18) that conducts research and creates action plans to improve the physical, mental, and sexual health of the city's youth. Through discussions with the Chicago Public Schools Office of Student Health and Wellness' (Departments of Whole Child & Health Policy and LGBTQ+ & Sexual Health Program), as well as with researchers from the University of Chicago's Crown Family School of Social Work, the THC developed policy recommendations to both the Chicago Department of Public Health and the Chicago Public Schools (CPS). Additionally, given the myriad of events occurring, both nationally and locally, the THC emphasized the significance of racial and gender inequities and their impact on public health. Thus, the THC's recommendations are constructed through a lens of social justice and equity for all demographics of youth in Chicago.

## Framing Question

**How can youth inform and improve COVID-19, sexual and mental health policy, priorities and resources that impact young people in the city of Chicago?**

An abstract graphic consisting of white lines and circles of varying sizes, resembling a network or circuit board, set against a light pink background. The lines and circles are scattered across the page, with some forming a more complex structure on the right side.

*“It is so wonderful to see such smart young people in Chicago interested and really thinking about how to talk about health differently. To hear you talk about vaccine access and how to have mental health be part of health, and sexual health be part of health [...] I hope that this experience in the Teen Health Council has gotten some of you interested in health for the long term. We need folks just like you; folks that want to think about making systems better. Public health is about all of the things I am hearing you all care about. I love that you are raising your voices in terms of things that really matter for you and your peers’ health.”*

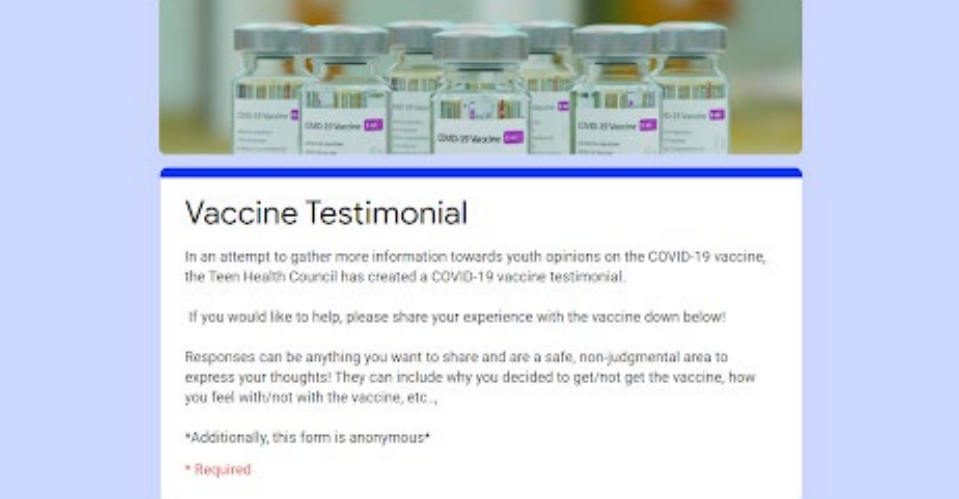
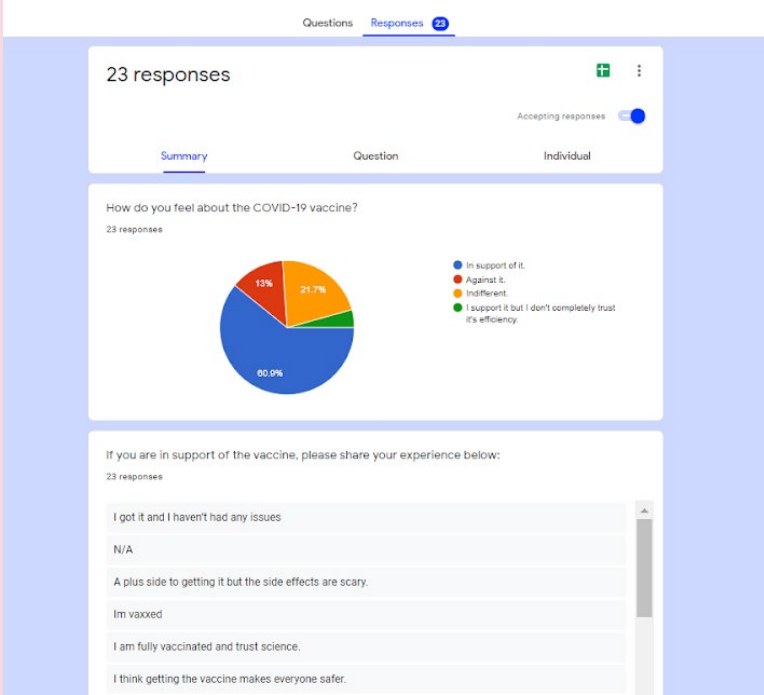
—Dr. Allison Arwady, MD, MPH, Commissioner of the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH)

# Recommendation #1: COVID-19 Vaccine Campaign, By Teens, For Teens

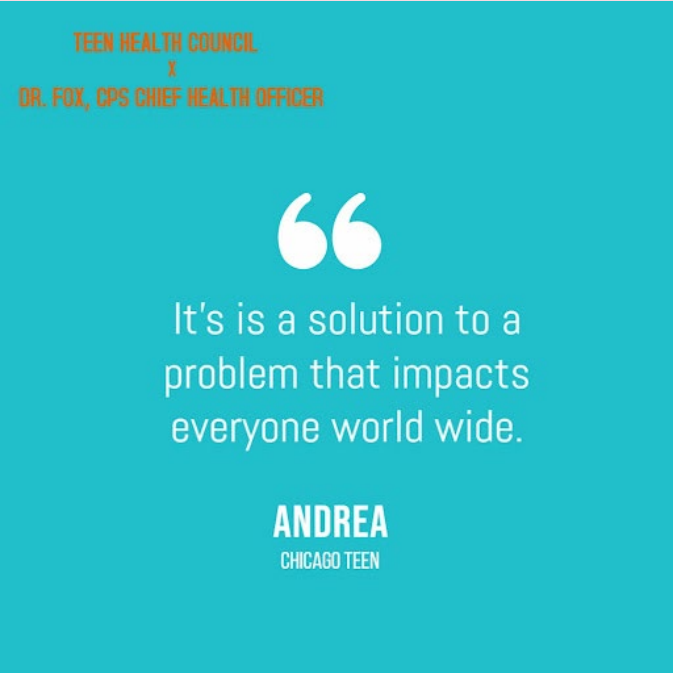
The Teen Health Council believes that the Chicago Department of Public Health, in partnership with Chicago youth, should use their social media platforms (i.e., Instagram, Twitter, etc.) to post more information to help encourage and promote Chicago youth to get their vaccinations. For a successful outreach campaign on social media, the Teen Health Council recommends that the CDPH post youth guided content that includes Vaccine Testimonials, Guides on how to Register for a Vaccine (or where to find one), and lastly, make all information accessible to all Chicagoans by also including translated versions.

Additionally, it is recommended that testimonials from youth be used as tools to generate trust in vaccinations, and to learn more of the reasons for not getting vaccinated. Together with the testimonials, guides (posted online or distributed by mail) describing how to register for vaccines, the medical effects of the COVID-19 vaccines and research supporting their safety, and general contact information would be highly beneficial to encourage more people to get out and get their vaccines, especially by reaching people who do not have access to social media and internet.

**Figure 1: Example responses from the vaccine testimonials survey**



**Figure 2:** An example of a potential Instagram post featuring testimonials from teens.



It is also crucial that content be posted in various languages, including Spanish, Mandarin, and Polish on all social media platforms, which would broaden the scope of youth reached by the campaign. In addition to the multilingual nature of the social media posts, it is recommended that the aforementioned social media campaign be run by a group of students, such as members of the Teen Health Council, with a potential adult supervisor if needed.



## Why it's Important

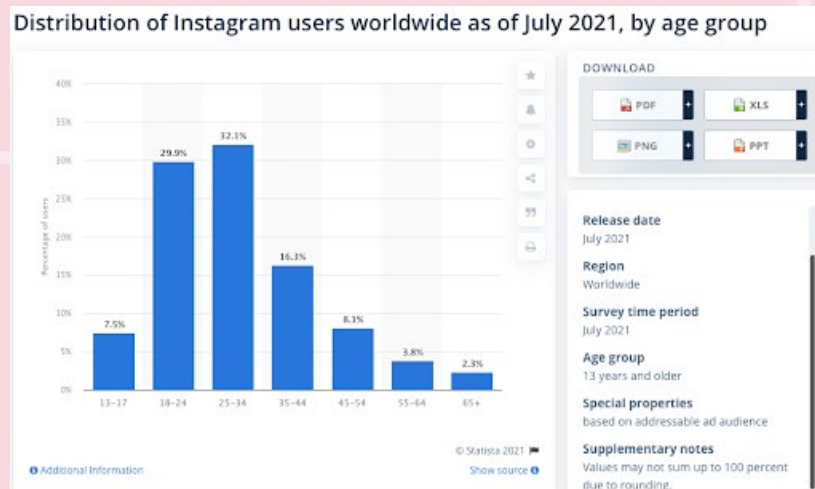
Through the use of testimonials, especially those coming from youth, it will increase youth-led encouragement between people of their age. Furthermore, a study from BigCommerce on testimonials found that 72% of consumers say positive testimonials and reviews generate more trust with the business. Testimonials will provide a sense of legitimacy between the youth of the city. In many situations, like that of vaccinations, many people refrain from an action due to not knowing enough about it or its outcome, and these testimonials would serve as a tool to combat that issue and to gain further personal knowledge on why people aren't getting vaccinated.

Along with testimonials, Vaccination Informational Guides are important in their ability to aid in debunking common myths, answer frequently asked questions, and provide information on how to register for a vaccine, which many find confusion in. The distribution of these by mail would also be highly beneficial in closing the digital divide, by giving access to those who do not have internet access.

As for the variation in language translation of social media posts, Chicago is well known for its great diversity. As such, creating translations would work to provide equitable accessibility and understanding of reliable, factual information. The mentioned languages should be provided due to them being the top three non-english languages spoken in Chicago.

With Chicago's great cultural diversity also comes diversity in ages, with one of the greatest unvaccinated populations of Chicago being found in youth, with 61.5% of 12-17 year old individuals having received both doses of the shot. Having a youth led campaign would create a unique and understanding perspective. Additionally, the youth of the COVID-19 campaign have gained credibility in becoming vaccine ambassadors.

Figure 2: Instagram users by age group



## Action Steps

Being that our target audience is Chicago teens, the THC recommends using Instagram, as it provides a great platform to reach our audience (37.4% of Instagram users are between the ages of 13-25). Instagram also gives access to many collaborations due to being a platform with many societal advancing accounts. Accounts we could collaborate with: [@advancingjusticechicago](#) | [@city\\_bureau](#) | [@stustrikeback](#) | [@mikva\\_ysac](#) | [@mikvajjc](#) | [@chipublichealth](#) | [@esperanzahealthcenters](#) | [@scy\\_chicago](#) among others.

## Potential Partnerships

To ensure that this recommendation is seen through, the THC is open to further collaboration with the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) to allow for youth to “take over” CDPH social media accounts, thus creating content for teens, by teens.

## Recommendation #2: Feedback for CPS' Suicide Prevention Policy Draft

The Teen Health Council recommends that the CPS Office of Student Health and Wellness adopt these recommendations into the new Suicide Awareness and Prevention Policy. With the sensitive topics that this policy includes, the THC proposes changes to aspects of the new Suicide Awareness and Prevention Policy to make the policy more inclusive, equitable, and well-rounded to help those in need.

The addition of a beforehand-prevention protocol to allow for lowered risk factors in students by regularly assessing all students for risk-factors, which would allow for quicker intervention from CPS mental health providers. The addition of hotlines/helplines and other resources specifically made for the LGBTQ+ community, and resources specifically made for Black, Indigenous, & People of Color would provide for a more equitable proposal.

Additionally, it is important that CPS recognize the low percentage of Asian Americans who utilize mental health services, thus deeming it necessary to create a safe environment for all with added efforts to reach AAPI students with hot/helplines and other resources specifically made for Asian Americans. Lastly, it is important for CPS to provide safe and trustworthy alternatives to calling 911 for individuals who desire such alternatives, and a separate hotline for students who identify as women.

### Why it's Important

While the policy has a strong plan for success targeting the aftercare of a suicide attempt, there are no beforehand tactics used to ensure a positive and safe environment. To lower the chances of depression and suicide ideation, schools can implement mindfulness training. Mindfulness training has been shown to help relieve stress, treat heart disease, lower blood pressure, reduce chronic pain, improve sleep, and alleviate gastrointestinal difficulties. Mindfulness improves mental health. Harvard found that mindfulness education lessons on techniques to calm the mind and body — can reduce the negative effects of stress and increase students' ability to stay engaged, helping them stay on track academically and avoid behavior problems. Training can be provided by the CPS Office of Student Health and Wellness and other SEL training centers outside of CPS include CASEL, Columbia Lighthouse Project, As for regular assessments and screenings, they should be administered to all students, as earlier identification leads to earlier intervention. The National

Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI) states that "Approximately 50% of lifetime mental health conditions begin by age 14 and 75% begin by age 24." These statistics led to the encouragement of early mental health screening in a primary care doctor's office or in a school. Mental health screenings in schools allow for faculty to identify mental health conditions early and connect students with help. School staff should be able to recognize early warning signs. The THC recommends that teachers be trained to work with the community mental health system and discuss mental health concerns with the families of students. The Council wants teachers to be trained responsibly and for them to take this seriously. They should know certain things about the student that is suffering.

The addition of specific resources for LGBTQ+ and BIPOC (hot/helplines, groups, etc.,) would greatly improve the lives of those students. The Trevor Project states that "Over one-quarter of LGBTQ youth who did not have at least one accepting adult in their life reported attempting suicide in the past year

compared to 17% of those with at least one accepting adult.” Seeing a decrease in the number of attempted suicides correlates to accepting adults having a hotline filled with people who are not only accepting, but can provide LGBTQ+ specific resources, care and understanding. This would exponentially decrease suicide attempts in LGBTQ+ youth. As for BIPOC folks, it has been shown by The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of Minority Health that the second leading cause of death for African Americans ages 15-24 was suicide. In 2019 it was shown that Black females, grades 9-12, are 60% more likely to attempt suicide compared to non-Hispanic white females of the same age.

Similarly, data collected by the National Survey on Drug Use and Health from 2008 to 2012 shows that Asian Americans are the least likely demographic to use mental health services, prescription medications, or outpatient/inpatient services. However, according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, suicide is the leading cause of death or AAPI folks from ages 12 to 19. Additionally, according to Koko Nishi from The George Washington University, data collected from National Latino and Asian American Study indicates that Asian Americans have a 17.30 percent overall lifetime rate of psychiatric disorders, and a 9.19 percent 12 month rate. Mental health issues are prevalent in the Asian American community, but Asian American folks are less likely to seek out mental health services than white folks, largely due to stigma in the community and low awareness about available resources. Therefore, Asian American students should be made aware of resources available to them.

Additionally, students who identify as women have been provided a separate hotline. A lot of students use social media to express how they are and what they believe in. Expressing oneself can be difficult, and cyberbullying can occur because students who identify as women can get bullied or targeted. This would increase suicide rates and make folks feel unsafe. The THC has provided a separate hotline for women because if they were ever suicidal, they can call and just express how they feel.

The Teen Health Council also recommends that alternatives to Calling 911

be shared with students. According to Henry J. Steadman (Ph.D.) and David Morrisette (Ph.D., L.C.S.W.), folks in an emotional crisis formed 25% of police shootings resulting in fatalities nationwide during 2015. However, 1000 communities had CIT (Crisis Intervention Team) training at the same time, a record number, which demonstrates that the presence of CITs does not necessarily mean a decrease in violence by police against those with mental health issues. As a solution, Ron Bruno, a police officer for 25 years and the executive director of Crisis Intervention Team International, told NPR that a crisis response system from the community without law enforcement in certain situations is essential. As a result, the THC has provided alternatives to calling 911 to be utilized as necessary.

## Action Steps

The Teen Health Council has gathered and compiled a list of hotlines and helplines that serve marginalized students, specifically Black and Indigenous students of color, students who identify as LGBTQIA+, and students who are Asian American and Pacific Islander. As mentioned earlier, these students have been found to have the most risk factors for mental illness and suicidal ideation, and as such require additional support. By having these hotlines posted in public areas of the school as well as having them be shared directly with students, they will have access to help when in need. In partnership with the OSHW, the Teen Health Council would like to determine the best course of action to inform students of these resources that are available to them.

Additionally, the Teen Health Council has put together a list of alternatives to calling the authorities for mental health crises, and would like to work with CPS OSHW to determine the best way to share this information to staff and students alike. The goal of this partnership is to ensure an equitable dissemination of information to all students in Chicago public schools. This can be accomplished through the use of social media accounts, mail home to students and their families, and ensuring the information is accessible to all students in school buildings.

## Recommendation #3: Feedback for CPS' Sexual Health Education Policy

The Teen Health Council (THC) recommends that Chicago Public Schools (CPS) launch a student-led campaign, #KnowYourSexualHealthRights, that informs youth about their sexual health rights. The campaign would be spread around CPS' social media accounts and featured in all schools with posters, banners, signs, etc. The campaign would also include information on what students should do if they get an STI, the options are for accidental pregnancies, and more. Also, including local organizations, such as ICANI, in the process of building the campaign would help increase available resources, knowledge, and experience. In doing so, the campaign will emphasize the significance of understanding one's sexual health, curbing the spread of misinformation and mistreatment.

Additionally, in understanding the school district's goal to provide students with medically accurate, age appropriate, and comprehensive Sex ED curricula, THC recommends that CPS introduce a gradual focus on pleasure-based sexual education, as opposed to the teachings of abstinence, to ensure sex is non-coercive and safe for all parties. With this, students will be better prepared to handle relationships, develop healthy communication skills, and have more confidence when addressing sexual health. THC also suggests that students are taught safe forms of masturbation and not to shame themselves for any natural behaviors. The council would like to reach out to local organizations, such as Sexexpectations Chicago, that focus on pleasure-based sex ed to use their resources and include them in the curriculum.

Although CPS includes support in the CPS Policy Manual for Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender Questioning Intersex Plus (LGBTQI+) students, as stated within II.C of the manual 4, adjustments can still be incorporated within the curriculum to create a more affirming environment for trans, non-binary, and

intersex students. One adjustment can be to change wording from "male" and "female" bodies to AMAB (assigned male at birth) and AFAB (assigned female at birth). Not all students that are male or female are AMAB or AFAB, notably transgender, non-binary or intersex students. Using AMAB or AFAB in addition to Intersex can be more affirming as it dissociates biological parts from the general "male", "female" terms. During reproductive system education, students should learn about different intersex reproductive systems and primary/secondary sex characteristics. Sexual orientation should also be introduced at the same time, along with the explanation of the spectrum of the libido which normalizes the lack of desire for sexual activity. In addition, THC believes that the lesson "HIV Now- Testing and Treatment" in the grade 12 lesson plan should not be optional. Lessons pertaining to HIV only exist within the curriculum for grades 5 and 8. One way that CPS can support its trans and non-binary students is to inform them of how they can get access to hormone replacement therapy and gender-affirming care. They can tell them about hospitals like Northwestern/Lurie's or organizations that do informed consent like Howard Brown/Planned Parenthood.

Contrary to the CPS Sex ED policy that states the curriculum, "provide strategies to support all students that are inclusive of gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, sexual behavior, race, and disability", the curricula only teaches students about these topics without providing any support to validate their identities outside of the Sex ED classroom 4. THC recommends the inclusion of more transgender/GNC representation in CPS, IDs with pronouns included, mandated gender-neutral bathrooms, the desegregation of classrooms based upon gender in Sex ED, trans-inclusive social workers, available information on where to receive gender affirming

care, and trans-inclusion in all classroom settings. As sexual health evolves throughout time, all education policies need to continue being as inclusive and aware as possible, including the new sexual health policy, to ensure schools are growing and improving. CPS can accomplish this by acknowledging that the lessons outlined within the curriculum will need to be reflected within the resources to create a safer, more equitable school district for all.

## Why It's Important

According to multiple members of the Global Advisory Board of Sexual Health and Wellness (GAB) in 2018, "Advocacy is needed to: support policy and legal change; demand equal opportunities, rights and conditions for all; promote investment in local and national rights-based sexual health services that address pleasure; demand quality of care and comprehensive sexuality education; and hold relevant stakeholders accountable." Due to the stigma surrounding sex and sexual education, students often feel uncomfortable speaking on these topics, especially with adults/teachers. Spreading awareness on their rights promotes safety, destigmatizes sex, and helps youth become more comfortable discussing their sexual health.

In terms of catering to youth curiosity, a survey of youth in Toronto by the Toronto Teen Survey Research Team found that sexual pleasure was "one of the top three topics they wanted to learn more about". Moreover, professors at the Department of Psychology in Jackston State University, divided a group of students up into three sections; each getting a different intervention - one was abstinence based sex ed, apone was comprehensive sex ed, and one as created by the professors. Afterwards, these students were asked about topics like sexual behavior, attitude toward sex and attitude toward condoms. The professors found that abstinence-only education led to "reduced favorable attitudes toward condom use" and "adolescents who receive abstinence-only education are at greater risk of engaging in unprotected sex".

According to the Center of Disease Control (CDC), Illinois falls into the 0%-24% range of schools that implement HIV, other STD, and pregnancy prevention strategies that meet the needs of LGBTQI youth. If CPS switches HIV teaching to be mandatory instead of optional, students will be educated on the virus which helps destigmatize it, creating a safer environment for everyone. If HIV education stays optional and a school opts out, students will have had no experience with HIV teaching throughout their schooling. The Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS) found that only 33.5% of Illinois secondary schools taught students about gender roles, gender identity, or gender expression in a required course in any of grades 6, 7, or 8. The Human Rights Campaign has found that 85% of parents support the discussion of sexual orientation during sex ed in high school.

## Action Steps

The Teen Health Council would like to work closely with the Office of Student Health and Wellness' Sexual Health Program team to implement the aforementioned recommendations. Seeing as these recommendations and related programs directly affect youth, it is important to have youth voice be a central part of the revision process, especially considering that the Teen Health Council has already established a close working relationship with the Sexual Health Program team. This partnership will ensure a smoother revision process and will maximize input of youth voice in the revisions.

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# 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 (Sered, *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 ¾ activity and ¼ 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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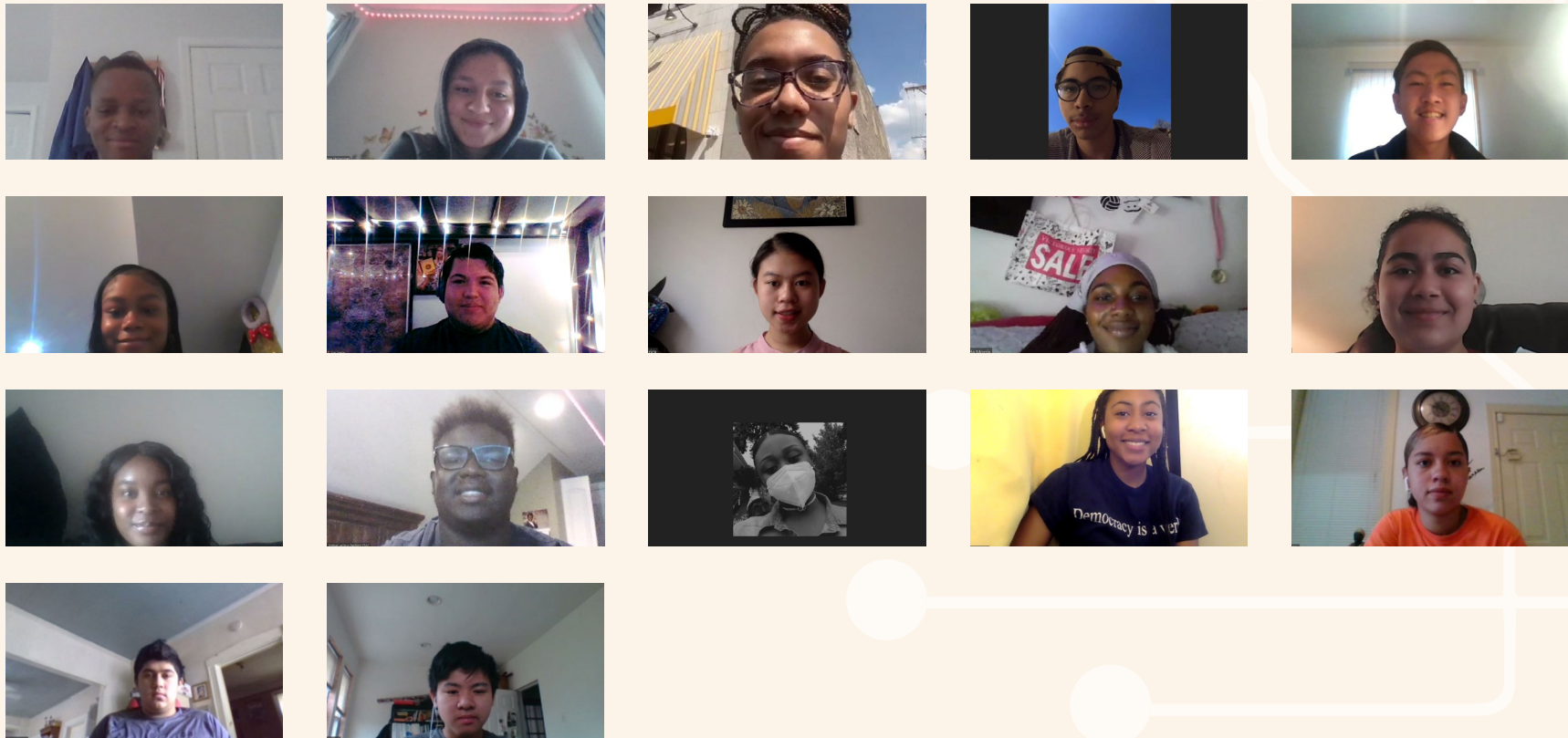
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# Youth Safety Advisory Council

The Youth Safety Advisory Council (YSAC) focuses on researching and discussing current policing behaviors and systems within Chicago in order to draft policy recommendations to optimize youth engagement with police by furthering accountability, transparency, and community voice. The following document is a culmination of our ideas to affect a better, more just, and progressive culture of policing and its relationship with the larger population. We hope that by publishing and proposing this white paper, we can incite legislative changes.



## Civic Engagement

- Talk to city leaders
- Write policy recommendations
- Community building within the council

## Mission/Vision

- Reimagine safety for young people
- Collaborate within the city on police reforms
- Get youth voices empowered + involved
- Community building + creating bonds with other youth
- Gain communication skills + team-building expertise

## Summer Snapshot


This summer, YSAC reviewed a survey conducted at the end of the school year. The survey found that the youth respondents were not informed on key issues and topics relevant to their own lives. Because of this, youth engagement and education were at the forefront of our minds as we focused on the consent decree and Pretrial Fairness Act. Throughout the summer, YSAC had the opportunity to speak with many leaders such as Maggie Hickey, Senator Robert Peters, Alderman Hadden, and Freddie Martinez. During the conversations with these leaders we were able to discuss the consent decree, transparency within the police department, the elimination of cash bail reform

in the Pre-Trial Fairness Act, and learning about surveillance technology the city is aggressively using including the ShotSpotter, hidden cameras around the city, and home monitoring devices. We have reviewed the discussions and research from the think tank summer in order to prepare and finalize actionable policy recommendations.

## Framing Question

**How can young people be a part of community engagement regarding Chicago Police Department policies and influence the consent decree?**





*“I was extraordinarily impressed with the presentation that I saw and the recommendations. And I’m so excited to be continuing the work with all of you. I was really encouraged and inspired because the Youth Safety Advisory Council brought really bright and fresh ideas on how to engage youth [with the Consent Decree]. You guys are right on target. You presented to me ideas that the PhDs I work with are presenting... Best party of my day.”*

— Maggie Hickey, Independent Monitor

# Recommendation #1:

YSAC will create a youth engagement strategy to implement multiple political education measures to engage young people in safety and Chicago Police Department policy.

## Why It's Important

After our conversation with Independent Monitor Maggie Hickey, we learned that the Independent Monitoring Team (IMT) for the Consent Decree needs to improve its community engagement measures. The youth engagement strategy that YSAC created will give IMT more community engagement opportunities with young people. The political education measures will also prepare youth to be active in the political field. With knowledge about Chicago Police Department (CPD) policies, youth can better understand their communities. Through the engagement strategy, youth can help hold CPD accountable and inform others on these matters.

## Action Steps

### Social Media Awareness Campaign

YSAC plans to publicize the results from both of the Youth Input Surveys on Safety and Accountability. These results will be posted on Mikva Challenge's social media (ie. Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn). This will be part of a social media awareness campaign that YSAC will lead. This campaign will include information about various topics regarding CPD policies, the Consent Decree, the IMT, and other policies and systems dealing with the safety of youth. We ask our stakeholders who have social media platforms and ties with Chicago Public Schools (CPS) or youth organizations across the city to help boost our campaign so that the information can reach a broader audience.

### Infographics

YSAC proposes that the IMT posts infographics on their website to display information about the Consent Decree and updates regarding deadlines for the

Chicago Police Department. These infographics would be an addition to the IMT's community engagement efforts. This will allow youth to access relevant information to hold CPD accountable. YSAC will assist in the making and implementation of the infographics to allow for smooth transitions.

### Political Education Program

YSAC will partner with CPS to create digital tools to be displayed on the CPS website. These tools will show information and resources relating to school and community safety. Possible subjects include SROs, the Consent Decree, other systems that affect the safety of youth, and an explanation of the rights of youth. Digital tools will be engaging and easy to access for youth. Information about the tools will be publicized through different social media platforms. The publicization would be part of YSAC's social media awareness campaign. We ask that stakeholders at CPS create and implement these digital tools to help engage youth in politics.

### Live Stream Event

YSAC proposes that in collaboration with the IMT, we host a youth-led forum to be live-streamed on Mikva's Facebook. This event would be part of YSAC's youth engagement strategy as it will help spread awareness of different systems and policies regarding youth safety. Publicization of the event will be part of the social media awareness campaign. Topics discussed at the forum will be about youth safety and resources available to youth. We ask for the IMT's help with coordinating the event and acting as a guest speaker. We also ask for permission from Vernee Green to use Mikva Challenge's Facebook account to hold the event.

## Recommendation #2:

Creating a mini-curriculum similar to Mikva Challenge's Issues To Action curriculum that reflects lessons related to the Consent Decree and Pre-Trial Fairness Act.

### Why It's Important

While meeting with Independent Monitor Maggie Hickey and through our research, we found that many young people were not aware of the Consent Decree and the current community engagement practices of the IMT team were not reaching the wider demographic of Black and Brown youth.

### Action Steps

#### **Public Pressure**

Public pressure is the biggest factor in enforcing the Consent Decree. Maggie Hickey suggested that if the media is mad, something will get done and thus we should focus on raising awareness therefore forcing Mayor Lori Lightfoot to address the situations at hand.

#### **Transparency and TIF Funds**

Both Freddie Martinez and Alderwoman Maria Hadden stated that CPD is being paid to be transparent; however, we do not know how CPD allocates their money. Considering that Chicago is the only place that has major issues with TIF funds due to corrupt politicians who use the money to benefit better areas that do not necessarily need it, educating people about why this is an issue will encourage them to vote for politicians who care about all communities and not just the wealthier ones. The police department budget decreased about 5% last year and that was because of vacant positions. The 2021 city budget allocates nearly 1.7 billion dollars to the police department (around 40% of the

city's budget). The corporate fund is the largest of several funds comprising the city's spending plan. We should shift the money from vacant positions into city workers such as social workers, mental health clinics, the education system, and communities that will take care of the citizens' needs.

### Potential Partnerships

We hope to partner with Chicago Public Schools to make political education a priority, remove the stigma associated with youth contributions to CPD policies, and empower the Black & Brown communities on the south/west side of the city to have access to a mini curriculum similar to Issues To Action.

## Recommendation #3:

Before the contract is extended or discontinued for ShotSpotter, we need to have an independent audit or group outside of CPD or ShotSpotter look into the technology behind ShotSpotter and also test its effectiveness or accuracy.

In addition to its effectiveness, the independent auditor or group should investigate the possibility of manual evidence tampering, such as changing the location of an incident per police request, as it would delegitimize ShotSpotter's use in investigations and forensics.

If the data shown from the independent auditor shows that ShotSpotter is ineffective, CPD should avoid using the system until it can be proven that it is effective. The funds used from the contract instead can be used to fund social services around the city.

### Why It's Important

ShotSpotter is a technology that is designed to alert police officers of gunfire within an area. It claims to precisely direct police officers to specific locations of incidents. ShotSpotter was implemented in Chicago in 2018, and its cost has expanded from 23 million dollars to 33 million dollars. But over its 3-year history in the city, has it had a positive impact?

We believe that ShotSpotter creates dangerous situations between civilians and police officers. These alerts send officers who are on-edge and aggressive into neighborhoods with potentially innocent people. The case of Adam Toledo is a clear example of the consequences of the use of ShotSpotter; although he did not fire a gun, the aggressive deployment of police from the ShotSpotter alert resulted in his death. In addition, a large amount of information surrounding ShotSpotter seems to conflict thus leaving its effectiveness in upholding public safety in question.

### Action Steps

We ask ShotSpotter to give an independent team of engineers the right to examine their technology, as well as be more transparent on the alerts it receives.

We ask our DMs to find unbiased acoustic and machine learning engineers willing to form a group to examine and test ShotSpotter technology, in order to find any flaws or biases that may exist under various outdoor conditions or circumstances. Upon testing the technology, they should report their findings publicly.

Whether it is through the Freedom of Information Act or not, we request that updated information on the number of ShotSpotter alerts and the number of crimes reported by police as a result of these alerts be made public. The May 3rd report by ABC's I-Team showed that 86% of ShotSpotter alerts were not crimes. According to the MacArthur Justice Center, ShotSpotter led to over 40,000 dead-end police deployments.

Finally, we ask our DMs or City Council to use both sets of findings to conduct a final discussion to decide whether or not to renew the ShotSpotter contract.

### Potential Partnerships

Lucy Parsons Lab

Office of Inspector General

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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.

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## Top 10 Tips for

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# 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




*“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.



