

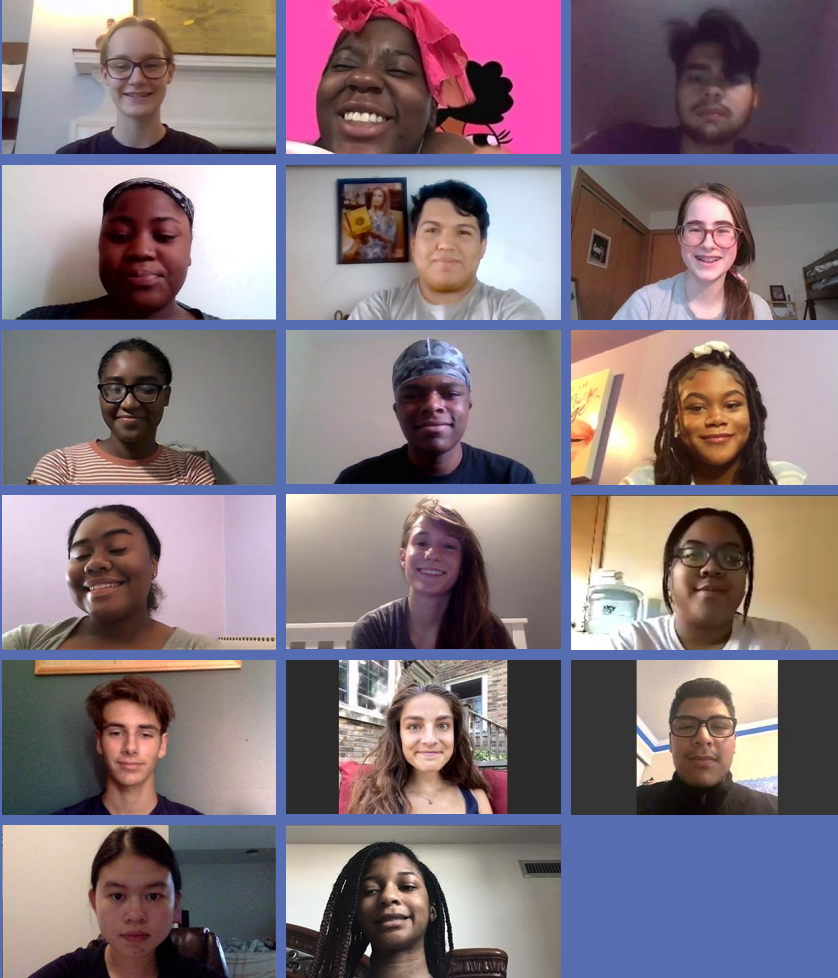


**Mikva
Challenge**

2020

**YOUTH SAFETY
ADVISORY COUNCIL**

YOUTH SAFETY ADVISORY COUNCIL



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YOUTH SAFETY ADVISORY COUNCIL

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

FRAMING QUESTION

How can community policing and public policy reforms inform police accountability?

SUMMER SNAPSHOT

Over the summer, YSAC had the opportunity to meet with Chicago leaders and stakeholders in Chicago Police Department (CPD) operations. During our first week, we met with Jadine Chou, who oversees the safety operations for more than 380,000 students in more than 640 Chicago Public Schools. We utilized her knowledge of the impact of punitive policies within the School Resource Officer (SRO) system to inform our recommendation in regard to police-community relations. In week 2, YSAC learned about the Civilian Police Accountability Council (CPAC) and Grassroots Alliance Police Accountability (GAPA) and the differences between the two plans. We also met with Mecole Jordan-McBride and Adam Gross to further our discussion on civilian oversight of the police. During the third week, YSAC learned about pensions, overtime, police bonds, and training within CPD with the help of Alyx Goodwin, who is a researcher at Action Center on Race & the Economy. During our fourth week, we met with Mariela Estrada and Deborah Witzburg from the City of Chicago Office of the Inspector General (OIG), who taught us how to navigate and find resources on the OIG website. We used their research tips to begin to craft actionable recommendations. During the final weeks, YSAC met with Ben Mckay as well as finalized the recommendations pertaining to the framing question.

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THE PROBLEM

Instances of police brutality, the militarization of the police through political rhetoric, and sentencing policies that have disproportionately impacted people of color and youth have continuously marginalized minority communities. Despite historically acting as a means for oppression, through reform and the refabricating of community-police relations, policing can play a fundamental role in enfranchising the country's most disadvantaged communities. In fact, through the implementation of public policy reform and community policing, the Chicago Police Department can act towards achieving a safer, more equitable, and more accountable system of public safety.

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Recommendation 1:

Community Policing Strategies - CPD Community Center for Youth

Inspired by a model to that of the New York City Police Department, we recommend that the Chicago Police Department (CPD) should create community centers for youth. A youth community center would provide a space of safety for all in need, especially for vulnerable populations such as victims of violence, immigrants, Black, Indigenous, people of color, and LGBTQ+ individuals through youth programming, mental health and educational resources, and community centered events. Ongoing community engagement can build thriving communities where people have the support they need to address harm without continuing cycles of violence. Through establishing a police-run community center, the city enables itself to refabricate community relations and perceptions of police, in addition to furthering community policing measures to provide greater service and protection to the city.

Why It's Important

In its community relations strategy, Chicago Police Department outlines community policing as imperative to creating a safer Chicago. Young people from around the city have experienced firsthand the benefits of community centers, especially in under-resourced communities. Eric Garcia, of Irving Park, says that this community center would create another safe space for kids and teens to go to where they can feel safe and stay out of trouble. It would be a place for them to stay, especially if other places like libraries or schools are closed. Jaelen Venable, from the South Side, believes that a new community center could directly contribute to making Chicago a safer place for young people. He has observed that many people do not have a safe place to go and end up out in the open, where they are at a higher risk for experiencing violence.

Aysia James notes that, "In the North Lawndale community, we lack community centers and it's also a lot of violence over there. It would be safer for the youth to have a community center to rely on without the fear of getting hurt and having support during hard times. We need the center for people who are in low-income communities, also known as resource deserts, that lack the programs that are in wealthier communities. It would bring people together and make them feel they have the support that wealthier communities have."

Potential Locations

The Police and Fire Training Facility being built in West Garfield Park can benefit both cadets and community members simultaneously. Those who oppose the approval of the budget for the Academy want the City of Chicago to invest in resources in communities such as West Garfield Park. The Police and Fire Training Academy is a perfect way to do just that, as money is already earmarked to construct the facility. By sharing its classrooms and gymnasium with youth and by providing a safe place for young people to go to receive support with academics, social services, and relationship-building, the Police Academy will incorporate community policing from the moment it is built. This usage of a Chicago Police Department space for a community center would exemplify the Police Department's commitment to serving the community, give youth a casual space within which to interact with police officers, and pave the way for more police-run community centers to exist in neighborhoods across the city. Additionally, if West Garfield Park residents voice that they would prefer the community center be in a different space, a shuttered Chicago Public School (CPS) could be another option that CPD could welcome the community into without taking on the cost of constructing a building.

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(Continued) Recommendation 1:

Community Policing Strategies - CPD *Community Center for Youth*

Steps of Action

Action Step 1: Listening Sessions with Community Residents

In November 2020, YSAC will have a virtual listening session with community residents of the West Garfield Park Area in order to get feedback on what they would like to see in the community center.

Action Step 2: Meetings with Supt. Brown + Potential Partners

YSAC will meet with Superintendent Brown in the fall of 2020 in order to get feedback on the community center and to create public support of the community center in the cop academy. YSAC will also meet with and evaluate potential partners on the site (After School Matters, Youth Guidance, I Grow Chicago, Joyce Foundation).

Action Step 3: Training for Youth Liaison Officers

In 2021, training for Youth Liaison Officers in community engagement strategies and youth center programs will commence. Some programs and services can include academic planning, counseling sessions, basketball games, and hangout spots and meeting rooms for youth councils such as the Youth District Advisory Council (YDAC).

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Recommendation 2:

SRO Training Reform - Mandatory, Local Based, Ongoing, and Youth Integrated SRO Training

The Chicago Police Department (CPD) should mandate the implementation and attendance of community focused School Resource Officer (SRO) training sessions. In addition, CPD should ensure the creation of a training program that works to proactively maintain and develop localized youth involvement, as well as develop positive relationships among SROs and students. Through localized training sessions (on the North, West, and South Sides) that integrate and highlight youth voices, SROs will be able to continually develop the tools to have positive interactions with youth. The current training models lack emphasis on the uniqueness of diverse geographical communities wants and needs within Chicago Public Schools (CPS) as well as youth involvement.

In terms of localized training, we are requesting that in addition to the newly enacted policy, that SROs within respective communities undergo regional training, delineated between Northside, Southside and Westside. This is important as each area of the city encounters varying difficulties and celebrates a vast amount of cultures and traditions, each impacting the way in which community members view and interact with policing. Thus, if the community policing rationale is expanded to allow for SRO officers to get to know the historical significance of the school and its people, better outcomes are likely to occur. This can be exemplified by student and community lead engagement within an area with a predominant cultural, ethnic, and linguistic heritage, such a community tour of Pilsen and Little Village, areas with high Latinx concentrations. If not already in effect, such training would occur on an annual or biannual basis in order to insure best practices. Moreover, collaboration incites a policing benefit, as “cognitive; emotional; social; and moral [skills]...may improve officers’ wellness as well as promote relationships between police officers and community members,” allowing both parties to receive benefits (Blumberg).

Regarding youth voice, we are requesting that youth obtain a voice and a standing within SRO training mechanisms, which can be actualized through an additional youth developed toolkit, community forums within schools in order to bridge understanding of student and SRO rights, a system of complaints against an SRO officer, and having youth on the ground through training, should the safety regulations permit. As students, and disproportionately students of color, are the most impacted by SRO presence, engagement and aggression, it is imperative that student voice is provided a platform to speak out and channeled into meaningful school, local, or district wide reform in years to come.

Why It’s Important

These policy elements should be implemented through the 2020-2021 school year to create a safe environment where both SROs and students feel welcomed, dismantling previous harmful SRO behavior and the culture it has bred. Creating a channel of influence for youth and community leaders in mandatory training procedures presents a sustainable solution for community change. This will also inform students and parents of their rights, which acts as another way to reduce infractions, besides the restorative and educational recommendations outlined in the current policy.

Within our city, youth seldom have the opportunity for their voices to be heard, and if able, often are subject to being stereotyped and manipulated. While the intentionality behind others wanting youth to speak is sometimes difficult to determine, it is not difficult to understand the value of student involvement in SRO training. Youth involvement not only creates a better perception of CPD and an equitable environment to share their voice, but young people will be empowered with a greater sense of purpose and capability. It is both an investment in development and safety.

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(Continued) Recommendation 2:

SRO Training Reform - Mandatory, Local Based, Ongoing, and Youth Integrated SRO Training

Steps of Action

Action Step 1: Mandatory Trainings

SRO annual trainings must be made mandatory for Chicago SROs and other Chicago Police Department employees working in or around Chicago Public Schools.

Action Step 2: Localized Trainings

SRO annual trainings must have a localized component which separates the city in North, South, and West side communities.

Action Step 3: Student Involvement

SRO annual trainings must have student involvement from the respective areas, functioning on a volunteer basis, in addition to YSAC, and if the popularity demands, operate on elected representation from each region.

Action Step 4: Handout with Student Opinions

SRO annual trainings must include a handout that will be created by YSAC, informed by a survey curated by and for CPS students to express student opinion. Sample questions include: What would you like SROs to know about your community and your student experience? and What can SROs do to have a better presence in your school? Additionally, the survey will analyze whether further efforts to establish youth voice, through community forums or introduction and information sessions are desirable or necessary, and if so, can be deliberated under the framework of our policy. This can be done through open forums hosted by YSAC and/or CPD through social media and even Zoom Meetings.

Potential Partners

- After School Matters
- Youth District Advisory Councils (YDACs)
- Chicago Public Schools
- Southwest Organizing Project
- I Grow Chicago
- Mental Health First Aid
- National Alliance on Mental Health
- National Association of School Resource Officers

The district is working with the Mikva Challenge Youth Safety Advisory Council to develop a training and measurement system that is designed to ensure student voice helps shape the effectiveness of the SRO program. Members of the Youth Safety Advisory have proposed that if SROs are to remain in schools, annual training must be made mandatory for them and other Chicago Police Department employees working in or around Chicago Public Schools. In partnership with youth stakeholders, this training program will work to maintain and develop localized youth involvement, as well as develop positive relationships among SROs and students. In addition, the district will work with the Youth Safety Advisory Council and other youth organizations to build a monitoring system that includes tactics such as focus groups, surveys and other ways to capture student feedback to measure the training program's effectiveness.

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THANK YOU

