



Get IN Chicago Key Learnings to Reduce Violence

In five years of funding and studying youth violence prevention programs, Get IN Chicago has learned a great deal about how we as a city can take incremental progress to larger-scale individual and community change.

Increase Focus is Needed On Acutely-High-Risk Youth

- Acutely-At-Risk youth are highly likely to be victims or perpetrators of violence and are already involved with or on the cusp of becoming part of the justice system.
- They are typically young minority men who have been victims of violence, are not engaged in school, had IEPs for cognitive or social-emotional issues when they were in school, have a parent who is or has been in prison and had several interactions with the juvenile justice system.
- Importantly, a distinction needs to be made between these acutely high-risk youth and the many youth in Chicago who are not achieving their full potential and would and do benefit from youth development and extra-curricular programs.

These Acutely-High-Risk Youth Need Highly Coordinated and Comprehensive Services

- Youth most likely to be involved in violence need a highly integrated set of services overseen by a professional case manager.
- Acutely high-risk youth struggle with a broad set of issues such as homelessness, substance dependence, education challenges, unemployment, trauma and bad role models.
- Get IN Chicago created its SYNC network (Strengthening Youth through a Network of Care) to provide integration among the programs addressing each of these issues.
- SYNC case managers work to engage target youth in a comprehensive set of services and advocate for them to get the right “dosage” for their specific needs.

Human and Community Service Organizations Need More Support & Capacity Building

- The capabilities and capacity of social services providers in Chicago are not currently sufficient to reduce youth violence.
- Underinvestment in the most violent neighborhoods has also led to insufficient investment in social service providers in those same communities.
- Community-based programs are critical to building trust, leveraging community assets and making it easy for youth to access services.

- Many non-profits are small with limited funding and don't have the capacity to invest in continuous improvement.
- Investment in identifying and disseminating best practices and expanding capacity is necessary.

We Need to Measure Outcomes in Addition to Services

- Assessing outcomes for social services is difficult but is necessary and needs to be expanded.
- Program delivery can be improved by instituting new measurement and accountability with the ultimate beneficiaries being youth participants.
- We need to move past the culture of measuring activity (30 young people in a mentoring program) to establish new metrics based on life progress (re-engagement in school, securing employment, getting counseling) and integrating them into performance management systems.