WHOSE SECURITY IS IT ANYWAY?
A TOOLKIT TO ADDRESS INSTITUTIONAL VIOLENCE IN NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS
BY LARA BROOKS AND MARIAME KABA
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WHOSE SECURITY TOOLKIT
During our years as youth workers, director of a youth center and as advocates for young people, we have repeatedly heard of or directly witnessed incidents like these and worse. Several articles and books have addressed the increasing criminalization of youth in the U.S. in a variety of spaces (Rios, 2011; Jones, 2011; Morris, 2015, Flores, 2016). In his book *Punished: Policing the Lives of Black and Latino Boys*, Victor Rios (2011) contends that “criminalization was a central, pervasive and ubiquitous phenomenon that impacted the everyday lives of the young people [he] studied in Oakland.” Rios also coined the term “youth control complex” which is defined as “a system in which schools, police, probation officers, families, community centers, the media, businesses, and other institutions systemically treat young people’s everyday behaviors as criminal activity.”
A neglected area of focus is the non-profit industrial complex that increasingly governs the lives of marginalized young people who are being criminalized by institutions like schools, hospitals, detention centers, and correctional facilities. Young people in group homes, drop in centers, homeless shelters, and recreational facilities are finding highly securitized spaces that are quick to punish and expel them. Our current social context is characterized by heightened racialized surveillance and increasing state violence, particularly against people of color.

Institutional violence\(^1\) within community centers, healthcare organizations, and social services, in concert with the “helping” industry’s increasing collusion with and reliance on law enforcement, fuels the prison pipeline. In response to pervasive institutional violence and increasing policing, surveillance, and targeting of queer and TGNB (trans and gender non-binary) youth of color, street-based youth, and youth experiencing homelessness, Project NIA through the leadership and initiative of Lara Brooks (former director of the Broadway Youth Center) has created a toolkit to share strategies of resistance to the increased securitization of non-profit spaces.

We hope our specific experiences activate organizations and the individuals working within them to reflect and take action, implementing both short- and long-term strategies to prevent, interrupt, and transform violence. It is our hope that increased awareness of these issues will ignite action among social workers, health care providers, administrators, funders, organizers, and community members.

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1 Refers to an institution, agency or system directly or indirectly perpetrating physical, sexual, psychological, and/or emotional violence or abuse. Also includes withholding or denying services based on an individual’s identities and/or experiences.
Working in collaboration with youth workers from across Chicago, this toolkit evolved from practicing violence prevention in complex spaces, youth and adult workshops, thousands of conversations, meetings convened from organizational crisis due to the impact of policing and surveillance, strategies used at the Broadway Youth Center (BYC), and research released by Young Women’s Empowerment Project (YWEP) and Project NIA. Most importantly, this work is informed by the experiences of healthcare and social service consumers, patients, clients, and participants—individuals who filed grievances, reported violence to YWEP’s Bad Encounter Line, demanded better services for themselves and their communities, and organized their communities to fight back. The result is a toolkit that illuminates the need and the critical necessity for organizations and the individuals working within them to interrogate policies and procedures with an intersectional lens, develop and learn from community accountability practices, and question program values and structures.

YWEP’s 2012 study Bad Encounter Line: A Participatory Action Research Project provides critical feedback for those of us working within the social service and health care industries. Before closing its doors in 2013, YWEP was a member-based, social justice organizing project for girls and transgender youth with current or previous experience in the sex trade or street economy. YWEP’s research presented key findings that “institutional violence makes individual violence worse” and described the denial of help from institutions “both passively and actively.” The spectrum of social and healthcare services is wide but, at its most extreme, is comparable to a correctional facility. As organizational leaders and workers, we must understand the impact and roots of institutional violence before we can fully acknowledge the ways our programs knowingly and unknowingly, passively and actively, deny help and—on some occasions—forcefully push young people closer to engagement with law enforcement.

As organizational leaders and workers, we must understand the impact and roots of institutional violence before we can fully acknowledge the ways our programs knowingly and unknowingly, passively and actively, deny help and—on some occasions—forcefully push young people closer to engagement with law enforcement.
Hired security staff and law enforcement located within social services, health care, and community centers will not decrease violence as a long-term strategy and almost always increase violence and harm—morphing into yet another barrier that prevents young people from accessing services purportedly designed to help them. In addition to the direct harms of arresting young people within social service and health care settings, a law enforcement presence undermines transformative youth work, values of community accountability, and interrupts opportunities for young people to mitigate and resolve conflict, harm, and trauma with peers and within their communities.

Many of our youth organizations, social services, and health care settings are constantly adjusting to instability. These include changes in capacity related to physical space, funding, staffing, access to the basic needs and supplies needed to effectively coordinate programs, and leadership transitions.

The ideas offered in this toolkit are based on the belief that approaches to preventing, interrupting, and transforming violence are interconnected, mutually reinforcing, and powerfully connected to capacity, multi-threshold engagement, and authentic relationship building. Most importantly, this toolkit is based on the idea that no young person is disposable. And neither are youth workers, providers, counselors, and volunteers.

The ways in which an organization, its workers, and youth participants internalize instability and pervasive under resourcing—and its impact on youth investment and engagement, youth leadership development, and increasing violence—cannot be underestimated.

NO ONE IS DISPOSABLE

We hope the strategies outlined ahead inspire, energize, and awaken possibilities towards creating more supportive, healthy, and transformative spaces for young people.

This toolkit was made possible in part through the support of the Institute for Research on Race and Public Policy at the University of Illinois at Chicago. In particular, we thank Dr. Beth Richie for supporting us in our vision.
The positioning of security or law enforcement at a program’s entrance is an additional barrier that youth must navigate. Young people, specifically those young people our programs seek to assist, report experiences of institutional violence including instances where security guards make sexual advances, escalate conflict, or violate program-defined boundaries between staff and young people. These realities become intense barriers for young people to continuously navigate in search of locating an organization’s resources.

Security guards and staff working in collaboration with law enforcement increase the likelihood that youth most impacted by the cradle-to-prison pipeline—a system that already unjustly targets LGBTQ youth, youth of color, and youth experiencing homelessness—will interface with the criminal legal system.

Young people report sexual, physical, and verbal harassment from security guards and police as an ongoing issue experienced in social services, housing programs, healthcare, and educational settings. As a result, young people rightly abandon the program or project entirely—which makes it difficult for staff to fully assess and respond to unacceptable and/or dangerous behavior. This violation of trust impacts all of the youth-adult relationships held within your space.

Security personnel and surveillance are costly to organizations. For less money, a program can implement effective strategies to prevent, interrupt, and transform violence with exponential reductions in violence. Examples include: replacing security guards with a greeter, youth worker, or patient navigator in areas open to the public; implementing a weekly community accountability staffing (see more here); increasing volunteer capacity by hiring a volunteer coordinator; and more effectively engaging young people as community organizers, leaders, and mediators.

Security, surveillance & policing in Youth Organizations, Social Services & Health Care

1. **MONEY**

Security personnel and surveillance are costly to organizations. For less money, a program can implement effective strategies to prevent, interrupt, and transform violence with exponential reductions in violence. Examples include: replacing security guards with a greeter, youth worker, or patient navigator in areas open to the public; implementing a weekly community accountability staffing (see more here); increasing volunteer capacity by hiring a volunteer coordinator; and more effectively engaging young people as community organizers, leaders, and mediators.

2. **DECREASED ACCESSIBILITY**

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3. **INCREASED YOUTH INCARCERATION**

Security guards and staff working in collaboration with law enforcement increase the likelihood that youth most impacted by the cradle-to-prison pipeline—a system that already unjustly targets LGBTQ youth, youth of color, and youth experiencing homelessness—will interface with the criminal legal system.

4. **INCREASED INSTITUTIONAL VIOLENCE**

Young people report sexual, physical, and verbal harassment from security guards and police as an ongoing issue experienced in social services, housing programs, healthcare, and educational settings. As a result, young people rightly abandon the program or project entirely—which makes it difficult for staff to fully assess and respond to unacceptable and/or dangerous behavior. This violation of trust impacts all of the youth-adult relationships held within your space.
5. **LOST HUMAN RESOURCES & TALENT**

Instead of using resources to train and support youth and youth workers to de-escalate, interrupt, mediate, and prevent violence, organizations with security guards expend resources with no structural impact on the root causes of violence itself. Onsite security negatively impacts staff capacity and morale—and may lead to staff burnout and turnover.

6. **FAILED VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION EFFORTS**

The presence of security guards will not decrease violence. Harsh disciplinary actions and a reliance on security and police to handle disciplinary issues damages youth-adult relationships—and simultaneously make youth spaces less safe. In many cases, physical violence actually increases in spaces with a security presence. These program failures impact short and long-term relationship building between youth and staff and undermine the effectiveness of staff efforts to prevent, interrupt, and/or transform violence.

7. **LOST CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND PEACE-MAKING OPPORTUNITIES**

Hired security officers and law enforcement contradict and undermine restorative or transformative justice methods of creating community accountability and program investment. The presence of security takes opportunities away from young people, in collaboration with youth workers invested in long-term relationships, to learn and develop conflict resolution and peace-making skills when engaging with peers, staff, or community members.

8. **CRUSHED HOSPITALITY**

LGBTQ youth of color and young people experiencing homelessness report profiling, harassment, and violence from security officers and law enforcement in schools, traveling between youth programs (i.e. walking from school to a youth center or from a shelter to an employment program), and in public spaces. What do you have in place to welcome new youth to your program? Is a security guard the first person that a young person encounters? What kind of first impression do you want your space to give to youth? The presence of security negatively impact efforts to provide a safe and welcoming program. This undermines program goals of creating spaces for young people to develop leadership skills, access health care, utilize basic needs, and more.

9. **DE-PRIORITIZED CONFIDENTIALITY**

Young people deserve access to confidential programs and services. However, security guards who are also off-duty police officers may not be held to the same expectations. The ongoing presence of law enforcement in youth spaces will damage your program’s reputation to confidentially meet the needs of youth most impacted by homelessness, HIV, health and educational disparities, and police targeting.

10. **DIMINISHED AUTHENTIC YOUTH LEADERSHIP**

Youth investment and buy-in cannot reach full potential in settings where youth feel unsafe or afraid of the presence of law enforcement or hired security guards.
WHY POLICING FAILS AS A STRATEGY TO END VIOLENCE

1. Sometimes the cops are too slow or do not come at all. It does not make sense for us to rely on them for our safety.

2. A physical altercation sometimes lasts less than a minute. It usually makes more sense for youth workers to try and separate involved individuals and use our relationships to gather accurate information, safety plan for those involved, discuss the consequences of decisions, and create transformation plans.

3. Our mediation and ability to resolve conflicts is more effective than the cops—mostly because we are trying to create change through relationships and accountability in a long-term way.

4. We aim to protect the privacy and confidentiality of young people accessing our services.

5. We want young people, whether someone is formally incarcerated or heavily profiled by cops in the neighborhood, to feel safe accessing our services.

6. It draws lots of negative attention to your space and should only be used as a last resort.

7. The cops can be racist, homophobic, transphobic, ableist, xenophobic, and classist to young people and staff.

8. Frequently, cops are harmful to both youth participants and staff. We have no way to hold them accountable, in the moment, and must then expend resources to repair the harms they caused.

9. Often times, cops harm the person or individuals who needed help.

10. The presence of cops often escalates, harms, or agitates the rest of the space (which is counter intuitive to creating a trauma-informed space).

WHOSE SECURITY TOOLKIT
INTERSECTING APPROACHES TO INTERRUPT PREVENT & TRANSFORM VIOLENCE

Community Healing, Accountability, Capacity & Transformation at the Broadway Youth Center (2006-2013)
Youth spaces, community centers, schools, shelters, and social service and health care settings are targets for increased policing and surveillance as well as sites of arrest, police and security guard violence, and gross misconduct. Many of these programs actively work with young people entangled in the criminal legal system to decrease its negative and long-term impacts. Paradoxically, despite research demonstrating the disproportionate police targeting of young people of color and queer and TGN (trans and gender non-binary) youth of color, these same programs do not work to prevent arrests, police harassment, or surveillance from occurring in or near their organizations. In a growing number of cases, youth spaces, community centers, schools, shelters, and social service and health care settings have fueled youth incarceration.

This is a recounting of youth workers and young people:

- Building values of harm reduction, community accountability, and the impact of violence and trauma into everyday structures and program design.
- Practicing, exploring, and learning from a wide array of strategies to interrupt, prevent, and transform violence through community and individual accountability practices.
- Grappling with the capacity limitations, broadly defined, of ever-complex youth spaces impacted by increasing policing and surveillance.

**Overview**
Community accountability work has fundamentally shifted our approach to trauma, harm reduction, community organizing, and organizational change work. Through long-term relationship building, community accountability serves as a vehicle to both actively and collectively resist and transform the violence present within and perpetuated by healthcare and social service industries. It rejects disposability and easy answers and one-size-fits-all methods.

Community accountability work within a stressed and chaotic nonprofit context is a tremendous commitment requiring ongoing practice, reflection, and skill-building. It can be frustrating, time intensive, imperfect, and messy. It challenges even the best internal communication systems. But it can also shift and transform organizational culture and norms in powerful ways. **Most importantly, the investment in community accountability work made our spaces safer and parts of the work more sustainable.**

When frameworks of community accountability are centered, the elements of a program model—such as drop-in or youth housing program models—must also shift. Community accountability forces us to regularly balance individual and collective needs with finite resources and capacity. It is both pragmatic and creative.

**The investment in community accountability work made our spaces safer and parts of the work more sustainable.**

This is a Chicago story of digging in, the power of long-term relationship building, and intentional program design. It is just one of many examples highlighting the slow process of building mutual investment, trust, and respect through adult-youth partnerships with young people experiencing homelessness, queer and TGNB youth, and youth failed by “helping” systems. It recounts the process of developing daily, practical structures to prevent, intervene, and transform violence in a youth space designed to provide a spectrum of trauma-informed and multi-threshold health, educational, and social services.

Together, we built and practiced anti-violence strategies to simultaneously engage young people and youth workers who harmed others, had been harmed or survived violence themselves, participated as bystanders, or all three. **This is a story about the power of adult-youth partnerships and their ability to inform strategies that promote youth safety in the face of an unforgiving and relentless police state.**

In response, the Broadway Youth Center (BYC) created systems to actively resist the need for law enforcement to intervene when, for example, interpersonal conflicts could be mitigated more effectively through a mediation that values the intersection of long-term relationships, complex identities and experiences, and space for reflection. At the same time, BYC youth workers created systems to reduce harm when law enforcement had already been activated.
COMMON LANGUAGE

We did not use words like harm reduction and transformative justice to indicate a single program or “intervention.” Harm reduction is a philosophy of living, surviving and resisting oppression and violence that centers self-determination and non-condemning access to an array of options. Transformative justice can be broadly defined as a community-based movement of ending violence without reliance on the prison industrial complex (PIC), the state, or harmful institutions.

Very real limitations to harm reduction and transformative justice exist within the social service and healthcare industries, especially as it relates to youth-targeted laws around consent and mandated reporting. However, by centering the values of harm reduction and transformative justice into our youth work, we can and do create alternative models, strategies, and practices that simultaneously move young people experiencing homelessness farther from the prison system and offer solutions that move us closer to prison abolition.
In November of 2004, the Broadway Youth Center (BYC), a program of four founding partners—Howard Brown Health, Teen Living Programs, Lurie Children’s Hospital (formerly Children’s Memorial Hospital), and The Night Ministry—launched services designed to support the needs of LGBTQ young people experiencing homelessness. The BYC provided basic needs drop-in services, evening programming, HIV/STI testing and treatment, medical services, counseling, and case management to LGBTQ youth and youth experiencing homelessness within one physical space.

Within two years, the BYC expanded services to include a GED program and LGBTQ mentor program. The model focused on providing youth with an array of accessible, trauma-informed, and low-threshold services’ using harm reduction and relationship-building as a central component.

The Broadway Youth Center’s principal staff believed that harm reduction practices, respect, and radical hospitality were not only possible within a social service paradigm but, more importantly, these values were a human right.

By no means all-encompassing, this toolkit recounts the BYC’s basic needs drop-in programming efforts, spanning between 2006 and 2013, to design structures, practice violence prevention and intervention strategies, learn from mistakes, and grapple with the capacity limitations of complex youth spaces.

We chronicled some of what we learned from the violence prevention, intervention, and transformation strategies and practices used within a youth-centered, social service model. We think there is value in sharing examples of ways to create spaces that heal the impact of institutional violence within a social service paradigm.

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1 Refers to an intentional program design that removes as many of the barriers to services or care as possible (e.g. identification requirements, lengthy intake forms, compulsory programming).

2 Refers to an intentional program design that removes as many of the barriers to services or care as possible (e.g. identification requirements, lengthy intake forms, compulsory programming).
The basic needs drop-in program was staffed by three of the BYC’s founding community partners: Howard Brown Health, Lurie Children’s Hospital, and The Night Ministry. In the beginning, the drop-in program operated five times per week and offered meals, basic needs (e.g. hygiene supplies, showers, clothing, storage, and safer sex supplies), staff-led programming, and case management services. The Night Ministry’s street outreach programs engaged young people experiencing homelessness and housing instability and referred young people to the BYC for services. As a part of the program model, The Night Ministry staffed several of the same youth workers at the street outreach program and within the drop-in program to support linkages, continuity, and communication between programs.

Over the years, the basic needs drop-in program began to grow in staff size and youth participation. It was not uncommon for the drop-in program to engage 50 to 70 young people daily. The program began with one case manager and, within a few years, hired one—and then two—case managers. The BYC hired a drop-in coordinator in 2006. In addition to the case managers, the milieu was supported by 4 to 6 drop-in workers daily.

The drop-in team met weekly to share programmatic updates and strategize about youth participant issues (e.g. the impact of physical violence, sexual harassment, intimate partner violence, mental health and trauma, and verbal violence on the individuals, communities or milieu). Addressing crisis and operational needs left staff with little structured time to anticipate and creatively address issues related to community accountability, violence prevention and intervention, and safety. As a result, the space began to experience increasing violence—both inside and in front of the building—which drew the attention of residents, law enforcement, business owners, and elected officials. In response to increasing community pressures, the BYC installed internal live feed cameras and the City of Chicago installed a blue light camera across the street directly facing the BYC’s main entrance. Squad cars drove past the BYC with high frequency and were often parked in front of the building or across the street. On several occasions, young people were arrested on the way to or leaving from the BYC’s basic needs drop-in program.

During this time, the drop-in program staff engaged in many conversations and learning spaces about the impact of policing, incarceration, and surveillance of street-based youth, queer and TGNB youth of color, youth in the sex trade, and youth experiencing homelessness. The team’s leadership shared strategies around de-escalation, conflict resolution, and mediation through in-house trainings and skill shares. However, it would take a deeper understanding of program capacity and sustainability to structurally address the roots and impact of violence.

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3 Milieu refers to the drop-in or group space wherein young people are sharing meals, obtaining basic needs, facilitating programming and meetings, supporting each other, practicing self-care, socializing, using technology, resting, learning about community resources, etc.
4 The live feed camera captured the interior of the main entrance.
In response to this and other questions, the Drop In Leadership Team began a process in December 2008 with the following goals:

1. Adopt a mission and values statement. This process would also inform the creation and implementation of Safer Space Guidelines.

2. Discuss and define capacity in a way that is holistic and multi-dimensional. This process included addressing case management and drop-in youth worker capacity with a plan that promoted sustainability; preserved low-barrier access; and strengthened anti-oppression, transformative justice, and harm reduction practices.

3. Create structures to address capacity and violence. This included forming working groups to prevent violence by holistically addressing capacity in the drop-in program.
Scarcity, real or perceived, is a root cause of violence in youth spaces. Is it possible to design a program model based on a more holistic defining of capacity that can not only prevent violence but heal?

To accomplish these goals, the Drop In Leadership Team gathered information and feedback from the following stakeholders:

- Feedback from youth-led community forums
- One-on-one interviews and surveys with youth workers (including staff, volunteers, and interns)
- One-on-one interviews and surveys with youth participants
- De-Escalation Workshop participants (16 youth completed a 3-hour skill share)
- Community Accountability & Transformation Task Force (which included seven staff and interns)
- Chicago Youth Worker Collective participants (from a training, “Creating & Supporting Community Accountability in Youth Spaces: Exploring Youth Organizing, Community Accountability, and Transformative Justice Models & Frameworks”)
The Drop In Leadership Team began analyzing the data and directly connected increasing violence with the basic needs drop-in program’s increasing issues around capacity.

The drop-in program defined capacity as the following:

**Total number of youth accessing services on any given day.** For example, 40 to 70 youth participants accessing services during the Tuesday drop-in program.

**Total number of youth in the space during any one moment.** For example, 50 young people in the drop-in space around 2 PM.

**Total number of youth accessing services throughout a given time period.** For example, the drop-in team has ongoing relationships and interactions with 700 young people annually.

**Total amount of resources.** This is defined as the number of staff and volunteers needed to not only operate safely but provide high-quality services and programs. This definition of capacity acknowledges the short and long-term impacts of youth workers mitigating multiple tasks, crises, and priorities simultaneously in an often chaotic group space. This category also includes the supplies, food, and showers necessary to operate.

**The physical space.** For example, dedicated spaces for resting, meeting with a youth worker privately, or participating in meaningful programming. The physical space also includes number of bathrooms and showers available, as well as the size of the community space and the total number of people that can sit comfortably at one time. Lastly, this definition must also include considerations around heating and cooling as well as the public space surrounding the program. For example, the front door is congested by the presence of bus stops, a narrow sidewalk, or its proximity to a busy intersection.
The Drop In Leadership Team received overwhelming feedback from youth and youth workers that all aspects of capacity must be addressed to achieve the following program goals—all of which are equally necessary for violence prevention, intervention, and transformation.

**Basic Needs.** Provide high quality services, including basic needs, to young people who are street-based and/or experiencing homelessness.

**Youth Leadership & Decision-Making.** Promote authentic leadership and empowerment. Throughout the program, the expertise of youth participants is valued and young people possess meaningful decision-making opportunities.

**Education for Liberation.** Create opportunities for both young people and youth workers to learn about, critically examine, and take actions on social justice issues that impact the BYC—such as institutional racism, transphobia, sexism, and criminalization. Also known as popular education, education for liberation engages all participants as both teachers and learners. As the experts in our own lives, we seek to create learning space to discuss the root causes of violence and oppression, such as poverty, racism, criminalization, and transphobia.

**Community Building.** Build and protect spaces that create opportunities for healing and intentional relationship-building.
New Hours of Operation. The program required additional meeting time for staff to address issues related to violence, increase youth leadership capacity, and improve resource sharing.

Daily “Exhale” & Increased Staff Communication. A debriefing or “exhale” time for staff was scheduled following each drop-in to discuss issues related to youth participant safety and share program updates. This was paired with a team “inhale” or briefing before the drop-in program began each day.

Capacity Proposal. We limited the total number of youth participants to no more than 40 at any given time. The drop-in program reviewed various proposals related to the number of young people accessing services at any one time. The program explored the idea of staggering drop-in times (youth are divided into two groups and can only attend Monday, Wednesday, Friday or Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday) or hosting multiple drop-ins per day. The team considered these proposals and their impact on accessibility, community building, violence prevention and intervention, youth worker capacity, and programming. Based on feedback priorities, the team decided to “cap” the space to 40 youth participants at any one time. We believed these limits promoted increased productivity (individually and collectively) and more opportunities for resting and quiet time. This was one of the most difficult decisions to implement because it challenged our approach to accessibility and engagement.

Creation of Community Accountability Structure. The Healing & Community Accountability Task Force (subsequently named the Community Healing, Accountability, and Transformation group) was created to research existing models and propose a structure to the drop-in team.

Transit Assistance. The drop-in program allocated its transit budget to incentive youth jobs, such as serving meals, operating the food bank, distributing donated clothes, and designing and facilitating workshops.
In December of 2008, the Drop-In Leadership Team selected youth workers for the Healing & Community Accountability Task Force. This group was charged with the task of creating a proposal for the February 2009 Drop-In Team Retreat to respond to increasing physical and verbal violence. The Drop-In Leadership Team requested that this Task Force envision a proposal, with both long-and short-term components, that incorporated transformative justice practices and anti-oppression values, envisioned strategies to reduce harm and violence in the drop-in space through relationship building, and utilized popular education and youth organizing.

The Task Force met in early 2009 to discuss the creation of an intentional, regular, and time-limited venue—for both youth participants and youth workers—that developed and implemented violence prevention and intervention strategies, provided space to heal from violence, and nurtured individual and collective transformation within the drop-in program through self- and community care practices.


Healing & Community Accountability Task Force

The Task Force reflected on excerpts from the Youth Worker Collective training “Creating & Supporting Community Accountability in Youth Spaces: Exploring Youth Organizing, Community Accountability, and Transformative Justice Models & Frameworks.” During this time, the Task Force received a great deal of support, training, and capacity-building from the Young Women’s Empowerment Project (YWEP).

The Task Force submitted a proposal to the Drop In Team at the program’s second retreat in February of 2009.

The goals of the Healing & Community Accountability Task Force included:

**Strategizing Space.** Create a space or safety lab to strategize about preventing and intervening when violence impacts the drop-in program. Decide membership and expectations for participating.

**Community Accountability Practices.** Promote healing, transformation, and create opportunities for communication and community accountability (e.g. process for determining consequences, reconfiguring safe space guidelines, etc.) with specific recommendations.

**Beginning & Ending Each Drop-In Intentionally.** Reconfigure drop-in briefing/set-up and debriefing/break-down with specific recommendations.

**Authentic Youth Leadership Development.** Recommend a long-term youth organizing model (an extension of the space designated for ongoing discussions about violence prevention and intervention) with specific suggestions on shifting to program models that promote authentic youth leadership and investment through youth-led efforts.
CHAT (Community Healing, Accountability, and Transformation) began meeting weekly for 90-120 minutes with 4-6 drop-in staff. CHAT’s membership reflected staffing through the week—ideally so that one CHAT member was present during each daily briefing and debriefing. CHAT designated the Drop-In Coordinator to convene, facilitate, and communicate with the rest of the BYC about CHAT’s activities and decisions.

**IMMEDIATE ACTION STEPS**

*Retreat for Further Planning.* CHAT convened to develop deeper relationships with one another and developed a work plan for the following year.

*Transparent Process.* CHAT presented this work plan to the rest of the drop-in team to promote communication, transparency, and openness.

*Learning about Community Accountability.* CHAT continued to research and learn from other community accountability and transformative justice projects nationally and internationally.

*Define role, responsibilities, and expectations of CHAT members.* CHAT delegated roles and responsibilities and sought external support from colleagues, youth, and healing projects to promote CHAT’s sustainability and assess its impact.

*GO.* CHAT began implementing practical strategies immediately.
SHORT-TERM ACTION STEPS

**Policies.** CHAT created and implemented policies and procedures with the goal of reducing violence and promoting safety in the space (e.g. protocol that alerts youth workers that additional support is need in various parts of the building or outside).

**Training and Skill Shares.** CHAT defined its best practices and created trainings about conflict resolution, responding to crisis, and de-escalation for both youth and youth workers.

**Continue Community Conversations.** CHAT created and supported workshops and community forums within the drop-in program that focused on accountability, violence prevention and intervention, and healing/ transformation.

LONG-TERM ACTION STEPS

**Youth-led Community Accountability.** CHAT committed itself to working towards a youth-led, youth-driven anti-violence model over the course of the next two years that trained and supported young people around trauma, de-escalation, mediation, and violence prevention.
**Strengthen Drop-In Program Briefing/Set-Up.** Youth workers will meet for at least 30 minutes prior to the start of drop-in, process the last several days’ log entries, assess for themes/trends, and set up together. *Premise: Reduce and prevent violence in the space and create proactive steps to connect with youth who may need more support within the milieu or follow up from youth workers.*

**Delegation of Drop In Roles.** Every drop-in program will have assigned staff roles, depending on the space and youth participant volume. *Premise: Reduce and prevent violence by ensuring that all team members understand coverage expectations.*

**De-Briefing/Team Exhale.** A comprehensive log entry must be completed for the next day’s team to process in tomorrow’s briefing. This log will document programming, staffing roles, issues impacting the milieu, and issues to be discussed in CHAT. *Premise: We want debriefing to create a space for learning and reconnection.*

**Violence Prevention.** Develop and implement trainings on trauma, de-escalation, and conflict resolution for youth workers and youth. *Premise: We want to move as a team with shared values and practices.*

**Verbal Violence.** Increase and improve responses to verbal violence in the drop-in space (e.g. shade, “reading,” and sexual harassment). *Premise: We want to practice and learn from one another about responding to verbal violence.*

**Safer Space Guidelines.** Create “safer space” guidelines that propose values—and not necessarily more rules or directives. *Premise: Values build investment in community spaces, not rules.*

**Youth Orientations.** Implement intentional orientations for new youth participants. CHAT proposes the creation of an orientation that maintains its values around low-threshold engagement but that is consistent in its messaging around values, mission, services, and expectations.

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6 Youth workers may have 1+ role per drop-in, including outside support (times varied), vibes, reception, orientations/intakes, resource advocate/case manager, food prep, youth jobs, staff coverage for each separate room/group space, programming support, closer (prepare young people to leave), clean up/break down.

7 We also talked about membership systems commonly used in youth spaces and decided against this language/model because many youth participants have negative psychiatric, inpatient, or group home experiences.
Review of Youth “Consequence” Process. Young people deserve an individualized process that includes room for growth and a long-term process towards accountability. One size or standardized consequences do not align with trauma-informed, harm reduction, and anti-oppression frameworks.

Additionally, we achieved consensus on this: Any decision above and beyond a consequence that prevents participation from more than one full day of BYC services must be discussed and reviewed at the weekly CHAT meeting. No one youth worker has the power to deliver long-term consequences to a young person without CHAT’s involvement.

We made this decision for the following reasons:

Time. Every youth worker and young person needs time to assess, evaluate and process actions or decisions that may have hurt another individual and/or the larger community. This time provides increased opportunities for creative solutions, information gathering, and reflection.

Youth workers are not infallible. We have our “favorites,” make mistakes, may unfairly penalize young people and get triggered in the moment. This prevents escalating situations like a “tug-of-war” between a young person and a youth worker. It also provides an opportunity for youth workers to give critical feedback to each other about mistakes that led to an unsuccessful or harmful intervention.

Sharing the practice. It is unsustainable for one or two youth workers to give all of the hard decisions about youth participation, accountability expectations, and next steps. With this process, any CHAT member can deliver a “CHAT decision.” This ensures that many youth workers are learning about community accountability approaches and strengthening important relationships with young people, thus deepening the “bench strength” of the team.

Alternatives to Time Away from the Space or “Suspensions.” These may include attending workshops about de-escalation, violence, and anger; individualized transformation plans; or steps to repairing a harmful situation.

Celebrations. Create opportunities to celebrate the successes of youth participants—especially as they learn to implement new coping strategies, create increased self-awareness, and be accountable to how their actions and decisions impact the rest of the community.

Youth Trainings. Create weekly or ongoing forums that incorporate self-care, political education, conversations about violence and the way it impacts the space, and practical strategies to interrupt and prevent violence in the space.

Learning from Community Accountability and Transformative Justice Projects. CHAT will commit to ongoing and intentional learning from groups and projects who have been leading discussions, projects, and interventions about community-based responses to violence, creating community accountability spaces for healing, and developing transformative justice practices.
In September 2009, the Drop-In Program changed its hours of operation to five drop-ins per week (one drop-in less per week) and designated one full business day to staff meetings.

Why did we do this?

Well, for lots of reasons. We needed more time to expand and deepen some of the projects needed to enhance the drop-in program’s capacity overall. These projects included CHAT, HUSTLE, and the Peer Advocate Project.

CHAT (launched in March 2009) convened weekly to prevent, intervene, and transform issues of violence and their impact on the drop-in program. Typically, meeting time was used to discuss the needs of 5-10 different youth participants each week. We collectively created transformation plans and strategized about the best ways to document our process and track decisions. Depending on the situation, youth workers who were not a part of the weekly CHAT process were invited to attend and offer insights, information, and support as well.

HUSTLE (launched in March 2009) aimed to bring incentivized youth jobs and easy-to-use, Do-It-Yourself-Without-A-Social-Worker resources to the drop-in program.

Peer Advocate Project (launched in July of 2008) is an LGBTQ youth of color leadership project that creates and facilitates workshops about issues important to the BYC drop-in communities. Peer Advocates are trained on harm reduction, sexual health, and violence prevention and paid for their leadership, facilitation, and workshop design.

8 The Night Ministry Youth Outreach Team provided food and supplies at another location during the day when the drop-in program was closed. This created an additional access point for youth seeking food and basic needs.

9 The Peer Advocate Project was created by Shreya Shah and Stephanie Fernandez.
The amount of physical violence in the drop-in space dramatically decreased. We believed this was due, in large part, to the following components:

**The 40 Cap.** With no more than 40-50 young people accessing our services each day, the program was more able to intervene and prevent violence in the space.

**Increased Resource Advocacy Resources.** With four full-time resource advocates, the program was better able to support and absorb crisis, build deeper relationships with youth participants, and hold the impact of trauma.

**Aging Out Process.** Aging out of a youth program can produce tremendous anxiety for young adults who have long-term relationships with youth workers. As a result, the Drop In Program began to think more intentionally about transition plans and discussed these plans in both CHAT and Resource Advocacy Meetings.

**Increased Transparency & Communication.** CHAT members presented on CHAT’s accountability and decision-making process at weekly youth community meetings. CHAT also shared its process with the entire BYC. This improved building-wide communication.

**Keeping it Complicated.** The CHAT Team affirms its resilience and ability to struggle with complex, important questions. CHAT worked hard to center harm reduction and trauma-informed frameworks in all of its decisions.
**Improved Documentation and Communication.** CHAT created a shared document to record decisions and transformation plans.

**Repurposed briefing.** The space to strategize about youth interactions before each drop-in improved opportunities to connect intentionally and efficiently with young people. As a result, youth workers remembered important details and strategically engaged more young people—in ways that were both trauma-informed and efficient. This allowed youth workers to better understand youth decision-making and gather more information, insights, and strategies from young people about the ways violence was impacting the space.

**Consolidating Important Meetings During a Non-Service Day.** This capacity response gave the drop-in team more space to process and absorb the ways violence impacts youth workers—and increased the capacity of our program to develop, create, process, create, learn, and build together.

**Youth Worker Capacity.** CHAT valued and respected staff capacity. Before the advent of CHAT, the majority of consequences were communicated by only one or two different youth workers—which set up an exhausting dynamic. With CHAT’s support, the entire team began to share the responsibility of navigating difficult, often uncomfortable conversations with young people about their actions and its impact. As a result, there was less pressure on one or two youth workers to conduct difficult and painful conversations and more shared sustainability, solidarity, and support.

**Milieu Capacity.** Transformation plans incorporated the milieu’s capacity to hold and transform verbal, physical, sexual, and emotional violence. Flexibility and fluidity—including the ways in which we are continuously transforming the space to meet the needs of young people—became core values.

**Creation of Drop In Roles.** In February 2009, we recommended the creation of various drop-in positions to support the overall functioning of the milieu. This delegation of roles allowed space for staff to engage in one-on-one conversations and discuss transformation plans. Ultimately, the creation of drop in roles was an important component of our anti-violence response.
**Increase Transparency and Visibility/Improve Communication.** Young people and other BYC programs need to be regularly updated and informed about CHAT—its current members, its goals and values, and its structure. CHAT decisions must be efficiently communicated to all impacted programs to support consistency.

**Clear Process.** Young people deserve a clear process to engage CHAT with questions, complaints or concerns. CHAT needs a clearly communicated process for individuals to engage with CHAT’s process if they do not agree with its decisions.

**Prioritizing all forms of violence prevention and intervention, not just physical violence.**

**Capacity & Accountability.** CHAT attempts to create accountability but hits barriers around how to strategically address larger issues of internalized oppression such as verbal violence and “reading” within its time limited structure.

**Youth Worker/Youth Partnership.** In partnership with young people, continue to build a milieu that responds to and “self-checks” issues such as verbal disrespect or sexual harassment.

**Complex Realities.** In our efforts to contextualize mental health issues, substance use, violence, and disabilities, we often struggle to find a balance that allows us to understand intersecting issues without perpetuating pathology and institutional harm.

**Drop In Team Solidarity.** Sometimes CHAT decisions do not reflect the sentiments of the rest of the team. As a result, our decisions sometimes feel unsupported or difficult to uphold. Similarly, although CHAT tries to assemble as much information as possible, it is impossible for us to represent all views, perceptions, or accounts of a situation.

**Significant one-on-one time between a youth worker and a young person is incredibly powerful before, during, and after a conflict. How do we ensure that we have the staffing capacity to make this possible?**
What does CHAT stand for?

CHAT stands for Community Healing, Accountability, and Transformation.

What is the history of CHAT?

In December of 2008, the drop-in leadership team selected seven (7) youth workers for the Healing & Community Accountability Task Force. This group was charged with the task of creating a proposal for the February 2009 Drop-In Team Retreat based on feedback from drop-in youth participants and youth workers. This group met in January and February of 2009 to discuss the creation of an intentional, ongoing, and efficient space that supports the following:

- Develop strategies for youth workers to prevent, reduce, and intervene in violence that impacts the drop-in program using harm reduction and anti-oppression values.
- Envision and share strategies that reduce harm and violence in our space through relationship building, popular education, and youth organizing.
- Strategize and implement ways to support the transformation of individuals, families, and communities in the BYC Drop-In Program.
- CHAT began to meet weekly in March 2009. This group meets for 90 minutes each week and addresses issues that impact all of our programs and services.

What does CHAT discuss?

- Verbal violence & Reading
- Physical violence
- Vibes
- Drama in our space and in front of the space
- Sexual violence, sexual harassment
- Stuff that could escalate or be dangerous
- The ways trauma impacts the people who use our space
- The ways people are making our space beautiful and tender and loving
- The ways people are helping each other out and supporting the space
- The ways people are strong leaders, healers, and peacekeepers in their communities
What are the meetings like?

During each CHAT meeting, we make a list of individuals who have impacted our space. We collectively share what we know about the individual(s) involved and brainstorm together about next steps. If we do not have the full story or need more information, we assign a CHAT person to reach out to that person(s) and gather information so that we can make decisions the following week.

**We create transformation plans for some participants—which can include the following:**
- Creating a transformation plan alongside youth participants
- Community accountability (like asking a youth participant to meet with other youth or youth workers to talk about what happened)
- Asking youth participants to leave the space for a few days or weeks
- Requesting youth participants to meet with us individually for a period of time
- Increasing relationship-building
- Thanking leaders, healers, and peacekeepers for all that they do everyday

**Here is an example:**
Let’s say someone has been verbally violent in our space. We begin to notice that it’s increasing or maybe other young people have told us that they feel uncomfortable. We make a note of this in our drop-in debriefing meeting and it becomes a topic at our next CHAT meeting. We discuss the situation and then decide to meet with the youth participant to talk about it. We come from a place where relationship building, community accountability, and meeting people where they are at is EVERYTHING.

**Overview of the Process:**
- **Check-In.** The youth worker (usually the one with the strongest relationship with the youth participant) checks in with the youth participant to name the issue. In this case, it is about reading and verbal violence.
- **Gather information.** The youth worker gathers more information about the what, where, when, why, and how.
- **Create a common language.** The youth worker and youth participant will also talk about why it is an issue and how it’s been impacting the space. We will also create a shared definition of reading—so that we can hold each other accountable if/when more reading happens in the space.
- **Create a plan.** Review the transformation plan with a young person. In this case, CHAT recommends a No Reading Transformation Plan.
- **Follow-Up.** Make a plan to check-in again and talk about the No Reading Transformation Plan. Follow up with CHAT and the rest of the team about this plan.
- **Celebrate successes.** Affirm changes and investment in the Drop-In community! Weekly community meetings are an excellent venue for this.
VIOLENCE PREVENTION, INTERVENTION & TRANSFORMATION STRATEGIES

Practical Strategies for Youth Milieus, Drop-In Programs, or Group Work

more peace, less police!
**CRAFT: Key Components of Preventing, Interrupting, and Transforming Violence**

**Capacity.** Knowledge of program and individual limits, policies, and boundaries.

**Relationships.** The length and depth of relationships.

**Assessment.** Get a handle on the variables as quickly as possible.

**Flexibility.** If a strategy is not working, quickly move to plan B.

**Team.** Clear understanding of roles, teamwork, and solidarity.

*Effective violence prevention, intervention, and transformation strategies rely on a strong foundation of solution-oriented, relational systems and structures.*

| Creating Norms & Expectations | Safe space guidelines and orientations  
<table>
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<th>Programming and community meetings</th>
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| Building the Relationships   | Know participants’ connections         
|                              | and relationships with community       |
|                              | Showing up in small ways over a long period of time |
| Approaching Violence at the Roots | Contextualizing act of violence within a larger system  
|                               | Safety and investment increases with individualized strategies that engage young people in practicing violence prevention as a way of being accountable |
IDEAS FOR IMPLEMENTING A CHAT IN YOUR ORGANIZATION/PROJECT

VISUALS
• Create and post a visual of or statement about CHAT’s goals and objectives with definitions of words like community, healing, accountability, and transformation. This could also include pictures of the current CHAT members.

CELEBRATION
• Create a Resilience Wall that highlights the contributions of your program’s participants.
• Celebrate the accomplishments of young people. Celebrate the successes of youth participants who practice self-care, cope with stress, gain increased self-awareness, and are more accountable to how their actions/decisions impact the rest of the community.

GRATITUDE
• Celebrate, affirm, and thank young people for their contributions through individual conversations and community meetings.

DOCUMENTATION
• Create a shared internal document to record decisions and transformation plans for all staff to review.
• Deepen the documentation process to capture evaluation of your successes and challenges. This could include annual or semi-annual reflections on lessons learned from a time intensive process or a difficult decision about an individual’s participation.

TRANSPARENCY
• Share information about CHAT roles and functions in your program’s community meetings.
• Develop a clear process for youth participants to engage in CHAT’s information gathering and decision making process. And communicate this process clearly to youth participants. Ensure a process wherein young people can participate in and negotiate next steps, including thinking creatively about personal accountability.
LEARNING
• Sponsor workshops and skill shares for young people and staff that reflect the practices and values of CHAT.
• Create and attend trainings on responding to violence, conflict mediation, and de-escalation. When trainings do not exist, host a skill share with youth workers and use popular education to guide strategies and implementation.
• Create and support workshops and community forums within your program that focus on community accountability, violence prevention/intervention, and healing/transformation.
• Continue to learn from innovative and creative projects seeking community accountability and transformative justice.
• Create spaces for healing circles and healing skill shares so that young people can share their self-soothing and coping strategies with one another.

COMPLAINT PROCESS
• Create a clear and fair process for youth participants to complain, compliment, and offer feedback about CHAT’s decision-making process and/or their experiences in your program.

POLICIES
• Know when it is time to take CHAT conversations to the larger team, especially if it could mean creating a new policy or program structure. An indication of this might include 75% or more of CHAT-dedicated time is consumed for multiple weeks by the same issue.
• Develop policies and guidelines to address instances of violence or emergencies that involve engagement with medical personnel or law enforcement.

REFLECTION
• Continue to learn from and share strategies with youth participants and youth workers about the ways our space can prevent, intervene, interrupt, and transform violence in our space and our communities.
YOUTH WORK TEAM STRATEGIES

*Develop a weekly group that addresses, prevents, and interrupts violence.* Discuss concerns, issues, or flags about youth participants, opportunities to prevent or interrupt all forms of violence in your space, and develop proactive transformation plans. The most effective transformation plans are created in partnership with young people. Document and centralize this process so that it is available to all staff.

*Communication plan.* Regularly communicate updates about youth participants. Who is going to communicate the transformation/accountability plan? How do we collectively welcome a youth participant back into the space?

*Individualized plan.* Youth workers create these plans with young people as a way to prevent violence and reduce harm in chaotic milieus or drop-in spaces. These may include:

- An agreement to check-in for five minutes at the beginning of a drop-in:
  - “Is there anything that you need from us today?”
  - “I just want to remind you of your transformation plan. [Insert brief overview of what has been agreed upon]. Do you have any questions about it?”
  - “How can I support your self-care today, however you define it?” If the relationship is further along, sometimes ask “How are you feeling in your body today?”

- Identifying a quiet space that is always accessible to young people—combinations of quiet group space and one-on-one space provide different options for youth to take care of themselves.

- Using your one-on-one time with a young person to talk about trauma, create a list of triggers in the space (i.e. people getting too close to me when they are trying to pass me, people moving my belongings, etc.) and ways to respond to them. Allow youth to practice working through these moments in your space. Affirm when young people are working hard and stretching themselves in group spaces.

*Non-shaming boundary-setting in groups.* Create a universal cue that indicates to both youth and youth workers that someone is asserting a boundary—whether it be to not touch me, hug me, touch my belongings, or talk to me about certain things. For example, saying something like “respect the limit” or “keep it cute.”

*Create intentional and thoughtful responses to verbal violence.* For example, a youth worker uses the words “keep it cute” to interrupt moments when we say things that are hurtful or shady. These are words that young people can also use when responding to verbal attacks. Create group and community space to discuss, define, and respond to “shade” or “hurtful reading.” Create working agreements and connect it back to internalized oppression, which is often times a primary cause.
**STAFF ROLES & CONSIDERATIONS**

*Designate a youth worker to watch for vibes.* The Vibes person possesses strong relationships with different young people and has strong skills in mediating conflicting and assessing for crisis. This person should be moving throughout the shared community space during the entire program and is responsible for reading vibes and checking in with other youth workers and youth.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Responsibilities may include:</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Supporting the capacity of the person working reception and/or greeting young people</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Keeping the team updated when a new person enters the space and requires an orientation or introductions</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Reminding youth workers to follow up with young people (i.e. following up on an issue, gathering more information about a situation that needs resolution, discussing a transformation plan, etc.).</td>
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*Engage youth throughout the entire accountability process.* Identify a point person to maintain contact with youth participants when they are unable to access the space.

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**PHYSICAL SPACE**

*Create multiple spaces* for young people to vent frustrations and release emotions. This could be a space for people to dance or a private space that is always available for emergency mediation.

*Self-care space can look many different ways.* Purpose a room within your space for resting and quiet.

*Intentionally create spaces* with specific structures, weekly schedules, and purpose/s. For example, what will be our working agreements in the computer room? What is the individual capacity for each room—six people or sixty people? How many youth workers are needed for each room?
BUILDING STRUCTURES & SYSTEMS

**Document and process daily.** Create an efficient method to discuss youth participants, areas of concern, and opportunities for growth and learning.

**Facilitate intentional orientations for new youth participants.** Create a 15 minute, relational orientation that shares messaging around values, mission, services, and expectations.

**Referral guides and basic needs.** Provide youth with a packet of referrals and resources when a consequence—invoking time out of the space—has been decided. Consider developing ways for young people to have access to basic needs, like hygiene supplies or sack lunches, when they are unable to access services.

**Aging Out.** Create an intentional process for young people “aging out of your services” (this is language that social services and the government uses to describe young people who are no longer eligible for services due to age). As expected, this time produces incredible anxiety for young people and often means an exponential decrease in supportive spaces and programs once young people turn 25 (in other communities, young people age out of certain services at 21).

**Group feedback.** Host weekly community meetings with space for young people to discuss issues related to the space, accessibility, and resources. Receive this feedback with open hearts and minds—it is a great sign of investment when young people take time to offer feedback and critiques to help us evaluate our programs and services.

**Individual feedback.** Implement an accessible grievance policy. Train youth workers and young people on how to use it as a tool for advocacy and meaningful feedback.

**Redefining engagement** to include space for resting, self-care, and community care. Let us eliminate the idea that young people are “doing nothing” in our spaces. No young person is doing nothing when they are surviving, 24-7.

**Give youth more control of the space.** Train, support, and pay young people for their leadership and expertise as it relates to facilitating community meetings and workshops, running a food pantry or clothing drive, or helping with the daily meal.

**Practice emergency preparedness.** Create and practice a plan to protect safety and privacy when an emergency 911 call is made.
INVEST IN STAFF & VOLUNTEERS

Training. Provide ongoing in-house trainings to develop staff and youth on issues related to violence, oppression, internalized violence/oppression, violence prevention, harm reduction, and consent.

Healing for youth workers. Build practices into the daily work that support youth workers impacted by violence and its devastating impact on our communities.

“SAFER SPACE” GUIDELINES & WORKING AGREEMENTS

Lead with values. Create and implement “safe(r) space” working agreements or guidelines that propose values—and not necessarily more rules or directives.

Tip: If your program has a lengthy document (more than 7-10 sentences or statements), creatively abbreviate it so that it is still understood and visible in the space.

Visualize values. Simply state these working agreements—in ways that can be referenced quickly and clearly. Create visual reminders of safe space values in the drop-in space. Create a safe space document that youth can sign individually or collectively.

Changing values. Check in about the working agreements annually. Are they still working for the community?
HEALING SYSTEMS FOR YOUTH WORKERS

Our healing path is not separate from that of the young people we work with. CHAT or another structure can be used to discuss or develop strategies that support and assess youth worker sustainability, teamwork, healing, and capacity. We discussed creating saCHATicals for CHAT members who need a break from CHAT’s intensity or are experiencing compassion fatigue. We also discussed the possibilities of rotating members so that everyone on the team learns from and supports CHAT’s process. CHAT also requires self-care and community-care space. This means creating time within weekly meetings or developing ongoing practices that ground the work when we are feeling overwhelmed, ungrounded, tired, or frustrated.

CHAT INHALE/BRIEFING

CHAT proposed additional changes and restructuring to the drop-in’s briefing and debriefing process in May 2010. This process flexibly guides and supports the beginning and ending of the drop-in program. See “Debriefing & Briefing Structures” for more details.

CONCLUSION

Since CHAT’s inception, the drop-in program has experienced changes in resources, space, staffing, and capacity. By 2012, the drop-in program experienced infrequent physical violence and possessed increased capacity to address verbal violence and sexual harassment. The resources that follow provide more strategies, resources, and checklists on developing community accountability practices with a project or organization.
INHALE/BRIEFING

SETTING UP INHALE/BRIEFING
(30 minutes previous to drop-in or group)

The team (defined as facilitators of the group or the staff and volunteers who operate a drop-in program or community space) selects a facilitator for each briefing. Facilitators rotate. The team selects a timekeeper for briefing. This person may also track time for debriefing.

*The facilitator guides the following process:*

**Roles.** Delegate roles for drop-in and exhaling/debriefing, including designation of a vibes person.

**Share.** Communicate CHAT updates and follow-up.

**Programming.** Discuss the day’s programs and workshops (ensuring staff support and supplies).

**Schedule.** Review scheduled appointments (if applicable).

**Roles, Again.** Review role delegation, especially if changes have been made due to CHAT conversations and/or programming needs from a particular staff person.

INHALE/BRIEFING WORKING AGREEMENTS

• Be on time.

• Be present and use this as a space to get focused and grounded.

• Use this space as a time to connect with your teammates.

• We value community building and relationship building as self-care.

• The timekeeper and facilitator will make sure we keep on task.

TRANSITION/BREAK-DOWN
(15 minutes following drop-in or group)

• Transition youth out of the space. These teammates will give 5 minute reminders to youth participants and prompt youth participants to leave at closing time.

• Outside support. This individual will make sure that youth participants are safely leaving the space and moving away from the front door of our space.

• Clean-Up. These individuals will ensure that the space is cleaned up and/or transitioned for evening programming, etc.
EXHALE/DEBRIEFING

SETTING UP EXHALING/DEBRIEFING (45 minutes)

The following roles will be assigned in briefing:

- **Facilitator.** This individual will complete or make sure that the necessary paperwork has been completed, facilitate the debriefing, and ensure that working agreements are followed. The facilitator will also bring documentation and service logs to the debriefing space.

- **Time Keeper.** This individual will ensure that the agenda is followed and the meeting is concluded within 45 minutes.

- **Lead Exhaler.** This person is responsible for leading a 5 minute self-care process for the team. This grounding begins the debriefing process.

EXHALING/DEBRIEFING PROCESS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Agenda</th>
<th>Role</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 min</td>
<td>Community and/or Self-Care Group Activity</td>
<td>Lead Exhaler</td>
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<tr>
<td>35 min</td>
<td>Explore and discuss:</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Programming</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Drop in incidents</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- CHAT updates and follow up</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Team check out (milieu dynamics/energy, notes)</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 min</td>
<td>Gratitude: Express</td>
<td>Lead Exhaler</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>thanks to teammates</td>
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EXHALE/DEBRIEFING WORKING AGREEMENTS

- Create a container for triggers and heavy disclosures or experiences. This may include creating space outside of debriefing for individual teammates to check-in with a supervisor or teammate regarding triggers and heavy disclosures or experiences.

- Use a community garden/parking lot for issues that need to be addressed further in a different capacity (e.g. team meetings, staff development, and CHAT). *This will be posted up and removed after each debriefing.*

- Respect the time.

- Be flexible (e.g. with teammate or youth crises).

- Approach this meeting in the spirit of collective healing.

- Be thoughtful about how you access your support systems and how you take up space and ways in which you share or disclose the experiences of youth participants to the rest of the team.

- Listen.

- Be as present as it is possible for you to be.

- No rushing. This is the time we have set aside for our collective healing and process.

- While drop-in is centered on the needs of young people, debriefing is centered on the needs of teammates.
## EXHALE/DEBRIEFING

### SAMPLE COMMUNITY & SELF-CARE ACTIVITIES

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEEKLY HOROSCOPE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>JUST BREATHE</strong></td>
<td>Move through a brief meditation or breathing exercise together.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>AROMATHERAPY</strong></td>
<td>Practice collective aromatherapy. Place a few drops of essential oils on a cotton ball and place in a sealed plastic bag. Inhale from the plastic bag by taking several deep breaths. This activity may or may not include time for collective breathing.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TAROT CARDS</strong></td>
<td>Share a reading together. Each worker picks one card and we learn about the card and its relationship to the other cards.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>THANK YOU CARDS</strong></td>
<td>Share supplies for card-making and have individuals create cards of gratitude for one another or ourselves.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SHARING WORDS &amp; WRITINGS</strong></td>
<td>Share words that speak of releasing anger or grief, self-care, community care, solidarity, or growth. Encourage everyone in the circle to read a part of the quote, poem, or excerpt.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AWARD SHOW</strong></td>
<td>Everyone draws names and prepares to give a 30-second speech during an impromptu award showing celebrating your team’s accomplishments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>SHORT MEDIA</strong></td>
<td>Share your favorite 2 minute video—it could be something inspiring or about babies or cute animals.</td>
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The Broadway Youth Center (BYC) endorsed The Street Youth Rise Up Campaign in 2011. The campaign was created by Chicago Street Youth in Motion, a task force organized by the Young Women’s Empowerment Project. The campaign seeks to change the way Chicago see and treats homeless, home-free and street based youth who do what they have to do to survive. YWEP’s campaign emerged from its 2009 research findings which discovered that young people are routinely denied help from helping organizations based on housing status and involvement in the sex trade and street economy. An overwhelming majority of young people were LGBTQ youth, youth of color, and/or youth experiencing homelessness. The Street Youth Bill of Rights was created to build young peoples’ resilience and resistance to institutional violence. The Street Youth Bill of Rights outlined demands in health care, education, law enforcement, and social services.
As an organization providing health care, education, and social services, the BYC’s endorsement was meaningful to program staff and youth participants, many of whom had been a part of Chicago Street Youth in Motion. By endorsing the campaign, the BYC agreed to following conditions (as quoted from the endorsement letter):

- The institution and/or organization must have a clear grievance process that is accessible to young people and/or use the Street Youth Bill of Rights as a tool to improve your way of working and supporting young people.
- The staff and youth leaders of the institution and/or organization must be open to attending our Street Youth Rise Up accountability trainings.
- If a young person is seeking resources through your organization and/or institution and does not meet your requirements in order to receive those services, the institution and/or organization
- Host meetings at your space when possible or help us find accessible, youth-friendly space for us to meet.
- Provide resource when possible, such as food.
- When possible, donation youth-friendly hygiene supplies and clothing donations.
- Ask individual/staff in your organization to sign on to the Bill of Rights.
- Support, endorse, or offer feedback about direction action mobilizing for the campaign.
- Distribute information and resources related to our campaign within your organization and among young people.
- Help us hold a fundraiser by endorsing or publicizing our event.
- Hang up Bill or Rights posters (provided by YWEP) in your space.
- Hand out Bill of Rights, Bad Encounter Line Reports, and Chicago Street Youth in Motion to young people who access your space.
- To learn more about the Street Youth Bill of Rights and Street Youth Rise Up Campaign, visit www.youarepriceless.org.

**Transformative Grievance Process**

Young Women’s Empowerment Project trained young people on accessing the BYC’s grievance process. Simultaneously, the BYC staff trained itself on converting the standard grievance process into a transformative conversation for feedback. By honoring the Street Youth Bill or Rights and the experiences of young people accessing BYC services, we began to welcome opportunities for organizational growth and improvement. The grievance process also served as an incredibly powerful tool for young people to practice self- and community-advocacy, strengthen adult-youth partnerships, and build resistance to institutional violence.
STREET YOUTH BILL OF RIGHTS

Created by Chicago Street Youth in Motion, a task force run by the Young Women’s Empowerment Project as a part of our Street Youth Rise UP! Campaign.

HEALTH
1. We have the right to receive fair treatment from all health counselors, nurses, doctors and health care providers who work with youth.
2. We have the right to receive healthcare services and or reasonable sliding scale Fees when accessing treatment. We should not be denied any treatment needed based on our insurance plan, income, or lack of insurance.
3. We should not be judged by a test counselor, nurse, doctor or health care provider based on our age, gender identity or expression, health conditions, illness, sexuality and/or their involvement in the sex trade or street economy because we are homeless, home free or street based.

EDUCATION
1. We have the right to a good education that is uplifting and respects each youth dignity and learning styles.
2. We have the right to not be turned away from education based on our sexuality, grades, gender identity or expression or economic class or because we are homeless, home free or street based.
3. We should be allowed to have other options for our education when school is not accessible such as online school and/or home schooling for those who don’t have access to internet, schools with child care for parenting teens and alternative schools.
4. We have the right to free food programs and free uniforms and books when we are not able to afford it with or without parental notification.
5. We have the right not to be subjected to unnecessary searches in school; discriminatory enforcement of rules, police and metal detectors in school, arrest or violent punishments for missing school, sexual harassment and discipline without a chance to be heard.

POLICE
1. We have the right to not be profiled or targeted by the police based on our age, race, gender identity or expression, sexuality, clothing or because we are homeless and/or home free.
2. We have the right to not be targeted by the police based on our gender identity or expression, age, sexuality, race or our involvement in the sex trade and street economy and/or because we are homeless or home free.
3. We have the right not to be criminalized by the police for being homeless or home free for doing what we have to survive by being involved in the sex trade, street economy. The police should receive training on youth and youth competent services providers on how to work with homeless, home free or street based young people in a respectful way and help them connect to voluntary and nonjudgmental services instead of arresting us.
4. We have the right to not be sexually harassed by the police. Sexual harassment and extortion of a young person is not permitted by law. Any allegation of sexual harassment by a police officer should be investigated and the officer should immediately be disciplined.

SOCIAL SERVICES
1. We have the right to be treated with respect and dignity and to not be judged based on our age, gender identity or expression or sexuality, and/or because we are homeless or home free, or because we are involved in the sex trade and or street economy.
2. We have the right to receive services regardless if we have identification or not.
3. We have the right to receive as much resources and services from both state and nonprofit service providers who offer to aid a youth living in a crisis situation. And they should not be judged based on their living situation or because they are homeless, home free and/or street based.

FOR MORE INFO VISIT http://youarepriceless.org
Gather information to assess the costs, limitations, and impact of onsite security. If your organization has security staff onsite, it is critical to obtain answers to the following questions as a strategy to advocate for alternatives and reduce harm in the short-term.

1 **FINANCIAL COST**

- What is the financial cost of security and surveillance within the organization?
- What is the cost to client-patient relationships, youth worker-youth relationships, and service outcomes when security guards patrol the organization?

2 **VISIBILITY OF UNIFORMS & WEAPONS**

- Does security staff wear uniforms? If not, how do you youth distinguish security staff from other staff or volunteers? Do they have a nametag that identifies their role in the space?
- Does security carry weapons? Which ones? If so, how do young people know that security possesses weapons?

>>> *Even if your security guard looks friendly and down to earth in their street clothes, it can be very confusing for youth to understand staff roles and expectations when the rent-a-cop looks just like everyone else.*
3 VIOLENCE PREVENTION & PEACE-KEEPING EXPERIENCE

- Do security guards have demonstrated experience in mediating conflict, de-escalation, and crisis intervention? Does this experience come from working in youth spaces or as a police officer?

- Does security have a private space to mediate conflicts or interpersonal issues? In situations involving the security guard, is it within this security guard’s job description to participate in mediated conversations?

- Develop a clear process—and never mandate that a youth participate in a mediated conversation with a security guard. Never leave a young person alone with security staff.

4 REPORTING LINES & PERSONNEL ISSUES

- Who trains and supervises the guard? What experience does the supervisor have in violence prevention, de-escalation strategies, and crisis intervention? What experience do they have supervising security guards?

- If the agency is outsourcing this service and there are multiple security staff, is there a lead security staff person that handles personnel issues? How does the agency handle complaints from both staff and youth?

5 INTERRUPTION OF SERVICES

- Can security guards access or interrupt confidential programming? Under what circumstances are they permitted to interrupt services?

6 SURVEILLANCE

- Does the organization have surveillance cameras? What do they record? Or is it a live feed?

7 “DOWN TIME” PROCEDURES

- Is security on site during all hours of operation? If not, what is the safety protocol when security is not available or on site?

8 REDRESSING GRIEVANCES

- Is there a process for staff and young people to file complaints or grievances against security staff? Who handles the grievance? Who mediates the grievances? Does that policy have clear complaint reporting, fact-finding and appeal procedures?

- If young people disagree with a decision that a security guard is making, what process is in place for them to file a complaint or speak with program staff?

9 LIABILITY

- Which security policies are dictated by liability and insurance requirements?
10 **BOUNDS OF AUTHORITY**

- Are security staff empowered to use physical force to intervene in conflicts?
- Can security staff arrest and detain patients and clients (including young people) within or in front of the space? If so, how are non-security staff involved in this process?
- How will this impact your program’s relationship with youth?
- Do security staff physically intervene? And with what techniques? What happens if a young person injures security staff or vice versa? At what point will the police be activated? Or are security staff off-duty police officers? What are the next steps if a security person injures a young person?
- How does security engage with law enforcement? How does a staff member engage with law enforcement? Is there a process for staff (including security) contacting or engaging with law enforcement (i.e. police arrive looking to question a young person, staff contact the police when a young person arrives that police were recently seeking for questioning)?

11 **TRAINING**

- Are there specific credentials or qualifications required to be employed as security personnel at the organization? What are they (i.e. knowledge of positive youth development, peace circles, etc.)?
- Does security staff participate in staff meetings? For what purpose and how often?
- Does the organization provide specific youth development training and/or workshops for security staff? Which trainings are provided?
- Does your organization provide specific violence prevention, intervention, de-escalation, and mediation training and/or workshops for staff, including security?
- Do security guards know about your organizations mission and service offerings? Do guards know how to refer or link patients and clients to the appropriate services?

**KNOW INSTITUTIONAL HISTORY**

Obtain institutional history about the decision-making process that led to on-site security and/or surveillance.
TOP 10 WAYS STAFF & YOUNG PEOPLE CAN REDUCE HARMs COMMITTED BY SECURITY GUARDS

FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

1. Advocate for alternatives to onsite security guards. Less expensive ways to keep our community spaces, clinics, and youth programs safe include increasing the presence of youth workers, patient navigators, and greeters in high-traffic areas or shared spaces. Other examples include hosting safety labs, without the presence of security guards, for staff and young people to create and practice strategies to prevent, interrupt, and transform violence specific to the program or organization.

2. Learn about the complaint and grievance process before something happens. Ask a staff member to show you the forms and ask questions about how the process works. Some questions to ask include:
   - Is there a different process for onsite security guards?
   - Does the organization have a Grievance Officer?
   - How does this process hold security guards accountable?
   - Who supervises and trains the security guards?

3. File a complaint or grievance when onsite security harasses, intimidates, threatens, or harm you. If you have a staff person that you trust, this person can also help you complete and file the complaint. If you want to file a complaint anonymously, find out how that process works to protect your confidentiality.

4. Safety plan with your friends and chosen fam. Share what you have learned about the grievance and complaint process with your friends and family. Some security guards work for a police department and can arrest you. Make sure your friends know your safety plan.

5. Safety plan with a staff person. Ask them directly if you can request that they be present if you are ever detained and questioned onsite by a security guard or law enforcement. What are the ways that a staff person can support you? This may include asking them to call legal hotlines or consenting, in advance, to a friend or family member being notified in the event of your arrest.

6. Demand staff presence when you are being detained or arrested onsite. Request that a staff person is present whenever a security guard is detaining you. File a complaint if you are ever detained in a room without the presence of additional staff.

7. If you are forced to leave a building or program by staff or onsite security guards, follow up with a staff person that you trust. Do not return to the building. They may try to arrest you when you return.

8. Ask for transparency around the number and type of arrests that occur within your building—including the date and time when they occurred. If there is a certain issue occurring frequently, this may be an opportunity to gather staff and young people to create and practice specific interventions that prevent the harms of youth arrest. Similarly, this is an opportunity to examine staffing patterns and capacity. For example, if most of the arrests of young people occur between 8 PM-10 PM on weekday nights, it is important to explore creative strategies that may directly respond to this trend.

9. File complaints when security guards harass, intimidate, undermine, or threaten you. If it is happening to you, it is most certainly happening to young people.

10. Request that security guards leave the spaces where staff and young people are working through conflict or community issues. The presence of security guards can often exacerbate violence and conflict and negatively impact trust and relationship-building between young people and staff. By requesting that security staff leave the space, young people and staff are trusted in their abilities to de-escalate and mediate conflict in ways that are usually more effective and long-term.
Implement Community Accountability Practices through Youth-Adult Partnerships.

Safety Labs.
Create space outside of direct service for practicing violence prevention, intervention, and transformation.

Employ Greeters, Youth Workers, and Patient Navigators in Public Spaces.
Many community centers, social services, and clinics have spaces open to the public. Staff these spaces with individuals who value relationship-building and possess skills linking community members to resources.

Peace Circles and Circle Keeping

Accessible Grievance Process

Meaningful Engagement Prevents Violence and Promotes Investment.
Provide employment, educational, and leadership development opportunities to young people—particularly young people of color, youth impacted by state systems like youth incarceration, foster care, and group homes, youth with disabilities, undocumented youth, and LGBTQ young people.

Work Against Institutional Violence in Our Systems
Young people deserve access to safe, gender-affirming, sex-positive, trauma-informed, and body-positive housing, healthcare, and education.

Access to Basic Needs Prevents Violence
Increase opportunities for young people to access basic needs in accessible, non-judgmental spaces.

Create Space for Dancing, Sweating, Performing and Exercising

Listen To, Trust, and Believe Young People
Staff Training, Practicing & Reflecting
Growing Capacity & Experience Through Safety Labs
Ethan has been hanging out in your programs for about six months and works with a case manager on a weekly basis. LB used to be friends with Ethan but they had a falling out recently. Today, LB and Ethan are both sharing community space in the drop-in program. Ethan decides to call 911 on LB from a cell phone and gives the address of the program.

Imagine that you are a staff member...

Ethan has been hanging out in your programs for about six months and works with a case manager on a weekly basis. LB used to be friends with Ethan but they had a falling out recently. Today, LB and Ethan are both sharing community space in the drop-in program. Ethan decides to call 911 on LB from a cell phone and gives the address of the program.

Preventing, interrupting and transforming violence within community spaces relies heavily on training, practicing, and reflecting work. We can get lost in policies attempting to create a universal response to complex situations that will never repeat in exactly the same way.

Instead, create a practice space or safety lab to share strategies and best practices that concretely outlines a sequencing of next steps.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IMMEDIATE RESPONSES</th>
<th>SHORT-TERM RESPONSES</th>
<th>LONG-TERM RESPONSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What happens in the space when staff learn that a 911 call has been made?</td>
<td>Meet with team to gather information and discuss impact of 911 call on space.</td>
<td>Discuss impact of 911 in community meetings, workshops, and group spaces, including its limitations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What happens when law enforcement arrive to meet with Ethan?</td>
<td>Meet with LB to discuss ideas for mediation or conflict resolution, gather information, and explore next steps.</td>
<td>See story about BYC/CHAT.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does staff engage with law enforcement? What information is shared with law enforcement?</td>
<td>Meet with Ethan to discuss ideas for mediation or conflict resolution, gather information, and explore next steps.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do you protect youth participant confidentiality and privacy when law enforcement arrives?</td>
<td>Discuss impact of 911 in community meetings, workshops, and group spaces, including its limitations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does the program prevent subsequent (related or unrelated) violence and/or harm?</td>
<td>Meet with team to gather information and discuss impact of 911 call on space.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How does the program address the conflict between Ethan and LB?</td>
<td>Meet with LB to discuss ideas for mediation or conflict resolution, gather information, and explore next steps.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discuss impact of 911 in community meetings, workshops, and group spaces, including its limitations.

See story about BYC/CHAT.
This is by no means an exhaustive list but here are a few must-have policies and procedures for programs to prioritize.

Begin by collectively reviewing policies on sexual harassment, confidentiality, grievances, boundaries, youth eligibility (i.e. delivering consequences to youth about changes in access to the program or service), and responding to emergencies/crises.

Because every situation is unique, it is recommended to pair the policies and procedures identified below with a best practices guide that approaches complex situations with flexible, yet guided, responses.

**POLICIES & PROCEDURES CHECKLIST**

- Privacy & Confidentiality
- Grievance policy
- Safe handling and disposal of sharp objects and bodily fluid spills
- Hospitalization of participants in crisis

**BEST PRACTICES GUIDE**

- **Emergency Procedures**
  - When a young person calls 911 from the space
  - When a staff person calls 911 for a medical emergency
  - When a staff person calls 911 related to violence
  - Assessing suicidality & trauma-informed support

- **Law Enforcement & Legal Rights**
  - Law enforcement requests for participant information
  - Law enforcement requests for identification from staff
  - Stop & Frisk (of staff and young people)

- **Ethical Adult-Youth Boundaries**
ONSITE SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS

Get clear on a process to file grievances against security
- If young people disagree with a decision that a security guard is making, what process is in place for them to file a complaint or speak with program staff?

Get clear on confidentiality and privacy
- Under what circumstances will onsite security work with the police?
- What information is security permitted to exchange with law enforcement and under what circumstances?
- Are security staff bound by the same confidentiality practices as your organization?
- Do security staff patrol spaces providing confidential services?

See “Case for Resource Re-Allocation”

Accountability
- In the case of personnel issues, including corrective action, who does the security guard report to?
- If the agency is outsourcing this service and there are multiple security staff, is there a lead security staff person that handles personnel issues?
- How does the agency handle complaints from both staff and youth?
## ONGOING STAFF TRAINING FOR SAFETY PLANNING & REFLECTION

This chart will help programs prioritize team needs and realities for upcoming meetings and staff workshops.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Situation</th>
<th>Staff responding to situation without a team plan</th>
<th>Some staff have a loose plan to respond</th>
<th>Some staff possess the training and support to implement the “best practices” plan</th>
<th>Most staff possess the training and support to implement the “best practices” plan</th>
<th>On a scale of 1-5, 5 being high priority and 1 being low priority, rate the importance of creating trainings and identifying a “best practices” plan for each situation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### ONSITE SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS

What is security’s role during emergencies?
What communication to security staff occurs when program staff contact 911 and vice versa?
When do police enter into the space and who authorizes their entrance into the space?
Use the tool below as a barometer to improve your program’s intersectional response to violence, crisis, and emergencies. Directors, case managers, and volunteers should have an opportunity to review this tool and provide responses.

Categories for assessment include:
- Safe Environment & Hospitality
- Clearly Communicated Expectations & Values for Youth & Staff
- Program Structure
- Programming & Youth Leadership

Based on overall responses, identify areas of improvement that are both short- and long-term, thereby growing overall programmatic capacity.

### Safe Environment & Hospitality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Irregularly</th>
<th>Ongoing</th>
<th>I don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff receive trainings to respond to onsite health needs, including bodily fluid spills and handling/safely disposing of sharps.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>The supplies needed to safely clean up spills and handle sharps are available and staff know how to use them.</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>The program space has bathroom access for all genders.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff and volunteers provide a welcoming environment and orient new participants to the programs and opportunities.</td>
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### Communicated Expectations & Values

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The organization clearly communicates expectations to young people in both visual and verbal formats.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>A grievance process is accessible to all participants in all programs.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☑</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff and volunteers are trained to respond to participant complaints, issues, and grievances using a strengths-based framework.</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policies around confidentiality and privacy are communicated to staff, volunteers, and youth participants.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Staff and volunteers have a structured opportunity and space to set-up and delegate roles and responsibilities before each group program. This same group of staff and volunteers also participate in a structured debrief of each group program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Structure</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Irregularly</th>
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</thead>
</table>

Staff and volunteers fulfill designated roles to operate a program or milieu. These roles and responsibilities are communicated to staff, volunteers, and youth participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Structure</th>
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</table>

Both briefing and debriefing is documented for additional staff and volunteers to review for subsequent programs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</table>

There is a debriefing or meeting following a crisis to discuss learnings and next steps.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Structure</th>
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</table>

Staff meet regularly to discuss and strategize around youth participants issues, concerns, and accountability.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Structure</th>
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</table>

Youth updates (transformation plans, linkage opportunities, etc.) are regularly communicated to all staff to support with collective boundaries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</table>

Staff and volunteers use youth-centered approaches to transform conflict.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program Structure</th>
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</thead>
</table>

Programming supports a spectrum of engagement and participation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programming &amp; Youth Leadership</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Irregularly</th>
<th>Ongoing</th>
<th>I don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Staff and volunteers support youth in building relevant skills (as defined by young people).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programming &amp; Youth Leadership</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Irregularly</th>
<th>Ongoing</th>
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</table>

Staff provide youth with the resources and support to lead groups wherein youth learn skills from peers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Never</th>
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</thead>
</table>

Youth have opportunities to participate in meaningful groups.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programming &amp; Youth Leadership</th>
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</thead>
</table>

Youth have opportunities to act as group facilitators, program designers, and facilitators.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Youth have opportunities to partner with adults.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programming &amp; Youth Leadership</th>
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<th>Ongoing</th>
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</table>

Youth have opportunities to make choices about their participation based on their interests.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Programming &amp; Youth Leadership</th>
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</thead>
</table>

Young people are active participants in programs and demonstrate high levels of investment.

<table>
<thead>
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</thead>
</table>

Youth have the opportunity to earn meaningful incentives through engagement in programs.
### Youth Centered Policies & Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>I don’t know</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff and volunteers receive ongoing trainings on program policies, procedures, and best practices.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff qualifications support a positive youth development focus.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Youth feedback informs program offerings, design, and eligibility.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff receive violence prevention, intervention, de-escalation, and mediation trainings or workshops.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Youth have influence on the program design in the organization.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Youth have influence on the program structures and polices that impact young people in the program.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff receive trainings on trauma, adolescent development, harm reduction, and positive youth development.</td>
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</table>

### Accessibility

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<th>I don’t know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Registration and intake materials are accessible to young people with different experiences and abilities. These materials are also inclusive of different identities and experiences.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programming schedules are easy to understand and eligibility is clearly communicated.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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*Before getting started with the tool, assess trends and themes using a root cause analysis.*

1. What kinds of violence occur most frequently in your space?
2. What is the root cause of that violence?
3. What can be put into place to address these issues?

*Include these conversations into your weekly working group or staffing.*
ACCOUNTABILITY

Can look/feel an infinite number of ways but strives to accomplish the following:

- Addresses root causes of violence and oppression
- Offers options/follow-up/process
- Needs active participation
- Gives space for different values/framework (letting people engage in a way that is comfortable for them)
- Supports resilience and survival
- Based on relationship-building
- Accountability is different from compliance
- Economy to hold folks accountable

More thoughts on Accountability:

- When someone whom we know cares about and respects us reminds us of something we both value, that is helpful accountability.

- We have experienced some confusion between accountability and self-righteousness. We have witnessed it, perpetrated it, and received it. Sometimes people say it is accountability but it is done without love/compassion and actually silences people. It is tricky.

- People need to want to be active participants for it to work. It has been successful for us when people acknowledge that there was a problem.

- Accountability begins with trust and mutual respect. With youth, they have to know and experience that you authentically care about them before you can even begin to build accountability.

- Accountability allows people to better understand who they are and why they do the things they do. It’s important for personal growth and needed to create safe spaces.

- Doing what you say you will. Trusting others to do the same.

- Ingredients: thoughtful process, asking why, how will we grow, how does this feel, taking ownership over personal actions and reactions.

ANTI OPPRESSION

Anti-oppression work is an ongoing, intersectional struggle for liberation that uses collective and individual understandings of privilege, power, and violence to transform and heal ourselves, our communities, and the world.

1 Creating & Supporting Community Accountability in Youth Spaces: Exploring Youth Organizing, Community Accountability, and Transformative Justice Models & Frameworks
A group of people with something in common – location, space, interest, birth, religion, life experience, identity – who may or may not identify as part of that community, and may willingly—or against their will and/or without their knowledge—be considered part of that community.

More thoughts on accountability:

• We think power and control are always factors when more than one person gathers, especially within community. Ideally, those who are in power are willing/strong enough to negotiate with others/those with less power, how they’d like power to play out.

• Being open to learn about and with each other compassionately and without judgment.

• Community is more than one person. People in a region, space, or area sharing time and experiences. Not always alike, not always with similar interests or goals, yet found in their community because of some commonality.

• Community is built through commonalities and differences among people, but most importantly a shared trust and commitment to honesty. Being each other’s keepers.

• Community can be geographic, totally abstract, or forced.

• 1) Being in the same space (real or virtual) – having intersecting interests, concerns.
   2) How are decisions made? Is there a dominant leader, organizer, or planner?
   3) Gather, time, patience, trust.

• Community is a group of people with a common something. Power and control can impact community when hierarchy, oppression, or violence happens.
We also participated in a values exercise based on the following statement: 
*I believe that consequences are an important part of creating safe space.*

### Some of these questions emerged:

- Do some of the space’s consequences devised to reinforce the status quo?

- Is it possible for us to create consequences based on both individual and community-wide contexts?

- What would objective, fair, and just consequences look like? We agreed that this would be an individualized process that includes room for growth and a long-term process to create accountability. One size consequences—even though they may be easier to consistently enforce—do no work within a trauma-informed, harm reduction, and anti-oppression framework.

### The role of consequences:

- Consequences can increase buy-in, promote safe space, and create opportunities for young people to learn and share in the community accountability and/or individual accountability process.

- Consequences occur naturally, sometimes unanimously based on the cultural norms or expectations of the community.

- Consequences are the reaction to what has happened—which includes a discussion, reality-testing, and dialogue.

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**HARM REDUCTION**

This framework intentionally, holistically, and creatively supports us exactly where we are, without preconceived expectations of success, while recognizing the impact of violence on our lives and communities.

**We value harm reduction practices that**

- **AFFIRM** the expertise, self-determination, and experiences of young people.

- **DEEPEN** our understandings of the ways in which individuals and communities experience risks, oppression, and violence—and the evolving ways we resist.

- **CREATE** accountability through intentional and youth-led relationship building.

- **PROVIDE** an array of options so that individuals can make informed decisions, guide their own healing process, and practice/teach harm reduction in their own lives and communities.

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3 Creating & Supporting Community Accountability in Youth Spaces: Exploring Youth Organizing, Community Accountability, and Transformative Justice Models & Frameworks
LOW-THRESHOLD

We value the importance of personal and informal engagement with young people that provides a quick and easy access to a wide array of services without traditional institutional barriers.

MULTI-THRESHOLD

In contrast to low-threshold programs—programs that work to reduce barriers for increased accessibility (e.g. a program that provides basic needs and does not require participants to have identification cards, to abstain from drug or alcohol use, or engage in mandatory multi-hour intakes)—multi-threshold program models advocate for both low-threshold access as well as ongoing opportunities typically considered to be higher threshold (e.g. organized sports, programming that requires multi-week participation, or trainings that lead to a graduation ceremony). Once a relationship develops between the program and the participant, other thresholds become available, at any given time, for a participant to access as needs, experiences, and identities shift or change over time.

In multi-threshold settings, participants have opportunities to choose from a range of programming—some of which may involve short or long-term commitments, expectations for participation, and community accountability practice work. Multi-threshold program models reflect values of harm reduction—meeting us where we are at as our lives, needs, and desires change and shift.
Organizing structures a community around a common passion, idea, or interest. By building bridges between concepts of people, creating safe space, visibility, understanding of self, and having voices heard, organizing embodies a community’s commitments.

- Organizing is a way for folks to get embodied/learn/create community/process/deepen ourselves and our relationships with others/talk about individual and larger issues/system stuff.

- People have different priorities and concepts of safe and the space can only be safe for everyone if a community with those insights, values, and commitments is organized.

- To develop structure and to create a common ground; successful techniques could be consistency, common agreements, and fairness.

- Organizing is creating community. Organizing because often accountability, community, safe space, etc. do not exist or occur because there is no idea of connecting people to each other, which is needed to create growth among people.

- Organizing leads to community, accountability, and safe space. Discussion and people’s voices being used and heard.

- Help people define for themselves what they are passionate about and what issues, ideas, people they want to organize around together.

- Organizing lends to visibility which can connect people and create community.

- Organizing creates and builds on relationships. The bond of accomplishing even small victories together is huge. What the important issues to youth? ASK THEM! Help them if they ask but let them figure out what they want to do and how.

4 Creating & Supporting Community Accountability in Youth Spaces: Exploring Youth Organizing, Community Accountability, and Transformative Justice Models & Frameworks
Defining safe space is challenging because ideas of safety are self-determined. Some youth workers do not believe that safety exists at all. A small group of youth workers defined safe space as being part of the whole by being able to separate into parts.

**Other definitions included:**

- Safety to make mistakes, to learn, to be forgiven, to have reconciliation, to receive grace.
- Safety to explore your identity and space to change.
- A space where you can be yourself, learn about yourself and others without violating the agreements made for the space.
- Safe space doesn’t mean you can’t be challenging or critical
- Exists when there is community buy-in around values of safety
- A place where there is room to explore every part of what makes who you are
- Being able to bring your whole self – all various and incomplete parts of you and knowing that you are welcome and respected and that you have room to be and be incomplete and in process.
- A place where there is freedom to have one’s voice and speak without negative consequences or loss of self
- Means that there is a consciousness – that the veil has been lifted and it is acknowledged that racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, and other forms of oppression DO in fact exist and there is a conscious effort by all to fight oppression.
- Safe space = my space, my home, surrounded by me, my creativity, my visions, art, music, food, NO JUDGEMENTS, no explanations.

**YOUTH CONTROL COMPLEX**

A system in which schools, police, probation officers, families, community centers, the media, businesses, and other institutions systemically treat young people’s everyday behaviors as criminal activity.
NOTES
WRITE YOUR INITIAL THOUGHTS, FEELINGS & REACTIONS

ANY LINGERING QUESTIONS? CONCERNS? NAME THEM HERE!

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IMAGINE POSSIBILITIES. What would it be like to live in a world where young people are trusted, not feared? A world where they knew they were loved enough to be listened to fully?

CONVERT THOUGHTS INTO ACTION. CHANGE HAPPENS ONE STEP AT A TIME.

Immediate Action Steps

Short-Term Action Steps

Long-Term Action Steps
This toolkit was informed by many youth workers and youth organizers. In particular, we would like to lift up the work and vision of Shira Hassan and Dominique Mckinney, former co-directors of the Young Women’s Empowerment Project (YWEP). Shira has profoundly impacted the landscape of harm reduction, healing justice, popular education, and youth of color-led organizing in Chicago and nationally. Early on, Dominique politicized BYC youth around institutional violence and used the Bad Encounter Line, direct actions, organizational accountability practices, and youth-led outreach to transform our spaces and communities. Shira and Dominique built powerful spaces for young people in the sex trade and street economy to build power and fight back. The impact and legacy of YWEP was and continues to fortify Chicago’s youth harm reduction movement.

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