

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Youth-Can Overview
- Keynote Address: *Sparks among the Stubble* - Eduardo Bocanegra, B.S.W.
- Breakout Workshops: Problem Solving / Conflict Resolution & Encouraging Leadership through Youth-Adult Partnerships
- Supporting Youth Resiliency through Collaboration
- Self-Care and Mindfulness
- UYTC Manualized Treatment Interventions: ICARE & STRONG Families



Urban Youth Trauma Center
Institute for Juvenile Research
University of Illinois, Chicago

Youth Voices and victories:
Overcoming community
violence and trauma

2013 Annual Conference



Youth-Can Overview

The Urban Youth Trauma Center (UYTC) sponsors the initiative: Youth Overcoming Urban Trauma & Healing: a Community Action Network (YOUTH-CAN). YOUTH-CAN is a network of community representatives striving to share information and mobilize responses to community violence as they impact youth and their families. The Youth Voices and Victories

Conference raised awareness about the needs of youth and families affected by violence, promoting the use of best practices for violence prevention and intervention, strengthening resilience, activation, and responsiveness among participants, promoting positive youth development, and fostering collaboration and connectedness among community members, professionals, and advocates.

Keynote Address: Sparks among the Stubble

Known for his work with Ceasefire and his role in the acclaimed documentary, "The Interrupters," Eduardo Bocanegra provided attendees with a telling story about the daily challenges faced by Chicago Youth. In a speech titled, "Sparks among the Stubble," the Little Village native detailed his own fight for survival, witnessing of community violence, and involvement with gangs and the criminal justice system at an early age.

Now a community advocate and student at the University of Chicago, Bocanegra

emphasized that despite his ability to rebound from such challenges and adversity, many youth in Chicago are not as fortunate. He stated, "I am the exception to the norm. People coming out of these neighborhoods and prison face challenges. Whether it's employment, family structure, or with education, they face many challenges."

Encouraging participants to ring the bell to a call of action, Bocanegra challenged them to stop what he referred to as "organizational gang banging" and to work together to end

violence and strengthen communities.

Last, Bocanegra challenged everyone to take a strength-based perspective when working with youth and to try to understand the challenges of those that have been affected by violence. Indeed, as the number of youth encountering violence in Chicago continues to rise, there is an even greater need for activists, clinicians, and organizations to understand the effects of community violence and trauma exposure.

Breakout Workshops: Problem Solving and Conflict Resolution

The Problem Solving and Conflict Resolution workshop was led by Dr. Jaleel Abdul-Adil, PhD, Co-Director of UYTC, and co-presenters David Farmer, PhD, Alison Kramer, MA, and Corrina Simon, MA. This workshop introduced effective problem solving and conflict resolution skills, and highlighted the importance of understanding conflict through a trauma-informed lens.

In small groups, participants discussed real-world applications of how they have integrated problem solving and conflict resolution skills into their lines of work. Participants were able to share challenges and success stories related to their experiences teaching these skills to youth and their families. Participants then engaged in a role playing activity called “The Artful Dodger.”

The purpose of this activity was to give participants a chance to practice the techniques learned in the workshop and think about how they might advise youth to apply the techniques when they are presented with similar situations. The groups identified creative solutions and discussed what it was like for the “actors” to approach the problem from the youths’ perspectives.

Both of these workshops emphasized a Positive Youth Development (PYD) perspective. The 40 Developmental Assets identified by The Search Institute can guide our work in promoting PYD. Visit www.search-institute.org for more information.

Encouraging Leadership through Youth-Adult Partnerships

If you would like a copy of one or both of these workshops, please send a request to uytc@psych.uic.edu. Please list in the subject line Conference Workshop Presentation



The Encouraging Leadership workshop highlighted the importance of youth-adult partnerships to promote positive youth development. Led by Dr. Liza Suarez, PhD, Co-Director of the Urban Youth Trauma Center, and UYTC Staff members Sonya Dinizulu, PhD, and Rabiatu Barrie, PhD, the goal of this workshop was to provide and

discuss methods to empower youth exposed to violence and trauma. Participants were provided with effective strategies for building and sustaining youth leadership and partnership programs. Understandably, it is not easy to have equal youth-adults partnerships, which requires shifting from adult-centered or adult-led programs: this is a gradual process.

Here are 4 key strategies for engaging youth or building youth-adult partnerships:

1. Encourage youth voice:

have at least 2 youth on your organization’s board to allow them to contribute to decision making

2. Encourage skill building: Build their capacity for leadership by highlighting the qualities of a leader

3. Work together: Talk with youth about the challenges they face and which solutions will be most effective

4. Don’t focus on the negative: Use a strength-based approach instead of only focusing on problems or deficits

Supporting Youth Resiliency through Collaboration



In a networking activity aimed at identifying ways in which organizations could work together to support youth resiliency, participants were asked to identify effective strategies for helping youth and families through the use of 1) individual/family level collaborations, 2) agency-level collaboration, and 3) community-level collaborations.

This activity was led by Co-Directors Jaleel Abdul-Adil, PhD, and Liza Suarez, PhD. After presenting a case vignette about “Javier,” participants

were asked to rotate 3 times, collaborating with various agencies to discuss how the three types of collaborations could be used to assist a family affected by trauma and community violence.

Individual-Level Collaborations can involve advocacy, sharing information to enhance services, offering assistance to find resources (e.g., individual and family therapy, case management).

Agency-Level Collaborations can involve sharing resources, establishing a referral network, attending cross-agency meetings (e.g., multiple agencies working together to address co-occurring issues such as substance abuse, domestic violence, and homelessness).

Community-Level Collaborations can involve raising public awareness or advocating to bring resources to the community (e.g., speaking with policymakers about need for support, advocating for community center for youth).

Participants are encouraged to collaborate with other agencies! A resource guide with all organizations and attendees present at the conference will be made available and sent electronically to you. A summary of what participants came up with during the workshop are below.

How you said you would work together to help “Javier”...

- * After-school program
- * Individual counseling with Javier (e.g., trauma or grief focused)
- * Mental health assessment
- * Job for Javier coaching basketball
- * Community violence teen group
- * Substance abuse services

...and his support system

- * Case coordination
- * Individual counseling with Javier’s mother
- * Family therapy
- * Multisystemic Therapy
- * Parenting groups
- * Part-time job for Javier’s mother
- * Advocacy and education at school
- * Needs assessment
- * Bilingual service-providers
- * Transportation assistance

Your Networking Ideas!

How you will establish and sustain partnerships to help more youth like “Javier”...

- * Cross-agency meetings
- * Monthly phone calls
- * Agency mail/email distribution list to inform other organizations of services
- * Work together to establish coalitions (e.g., restorative-justice, advocacy)
- * Follow up after making a referral
- * Partner with agencies both within and among communities
- * Identify shared needs and work together to address them
- * Maintain open communication - call instead of email
- * Provide training and technical assistance to other agencies
- * Collaborate on grant-writing efforts
- * Add your agency to resource lists used by large systems (e.g., DCFS, juvenile justice)

How you will work together to improve “Javier’s” community at large:

- * Speak with policymakers/aldermen
- * Identify key stakeholders and decision-makers
- * Attend community meetings
- * Work to streamline access to services
- * Advocacy and trauma-education at the school and other agencies that work with youth
- * Increase awareness within juvenile justice system of specific community alternatives to probation and incarceration
- * Enlist community members to extend the reach of your individual agencies and help maintain connections if funding ends
- * Organize community resource fairs
- * Increase community awareness about the causes and effects of community violence and trauma
- * Establish youth and parent task forces
- * Focus on prevention
- * Collaborate with religious institutions

Mindfulness, Self-Care, and Upcoming Trainings

Mindfulness Exercise

UYTC Staff member Stephanie Cojacaru led a guided mindfulness exercise for conference participants. The goal of mindfulness is to participate with awareness in the present moment and observe your own experience. As explained by Cojacaru, mindfulness is about taking a nonjudgmental stance and observing thoughts, feelings, sensations, and urges as they come up, without attempting to terminate unpleasant ones or prolong pleasant ones.

Mindfulness

- Awareness
- In the present moment
- With acceptance

Self-Care

Self-care is an important part of providing quality care and of sustaining personal and professional resources and capacities over time. The three essential tools in coping with secondary traumatic stress are awareness, balance, and connections.

Awareness: being attuned to your needs, limits, emotions, and resources.

Balance: maintaining balance among work, play, and rest.

Connections: connections to oneself, to loved ones, to colleagues, and to the larger community.

Self-Care in practice: Agencies can provide peer support as a way of promoting self-care. Providing “Innovation Days” once a month is one way one agency provides self-care. The staff spend several hours eating together and brainstorming ideas. Clinicians provide self-care by “debriefing on their own.”

Maintaining and/or strengthening self-care: Try to provide consistent support/validation and a space to talk to one another about what is on your mind.

UYTC Training Opportunities



STRONG Families: A manualized family-based treatment intervention for youth with traumatic stress and co-occurring disruptive behavior problems stemming from community violence exposure.

I-CARE: A manualized treatment intervention providing integrated care for adolescents struggling with traumatic stress and substance abuse.

If your agency is interested in trainings for YOUTH-CAN, STRONG Families, or I-CARE, please email uytc@psych.uic.edu.

I-CARE