This year’s conference focused on resiliency, gaining a better understanding of the issues affecting urban youth, and increasing awareness about trauma and community violence. It supported connections and collaborations across fields and levels of prevention and intervention services in order to increase youth and community access to trauma-informed resources, personnel, and services.

Conference participants included direct service clinicians (e.g., social workers and psychologists), school administrators, youth program workers (e.g., Girl Scout leaders), policy workers, program administrators, juvenile justice representatives (e.g., probation officers), and community leaders. The networking fair and collaboration activity fostered communication and connections among each of these areas of expertise. The cross-discipline collaborations helped to inform discussions and create an environment of teamwork and a shared goal of promoting resiliency in youth and communities impacted by trauma and violence.

The keynote speaker, Fenger Academy High School Principal Elizabeth Dozier provided an energizing, motivating, and informative narrative of her experiences with transforming the lives of youth at Fenger.

Each conference workshop provided a more in depth focus on a variety of topics, from restorative justice practices and healing approaches, to secondary trauma and fostering resilience, and one of the most popular workshops: Addressing the impact of trauma in school and after-school settings.

The early afternoon presentation by L.Y.R.I.C. Mentoring Program (Let Your Rhymes Inspire Creativity) showcased inspiring talent and energy as it moved and motivated the audience to find hope and methods of encouraging creativity and resilience.

This year’s conference served to energize and inspire participants, build useful skills relevant to violence prevention and trauma intervention, and support the development of linkages among participants representing various sectors, service systems, and communities. Each of these objectives helped participants to become more trauma informed and learn to work together to foster resiliency in the wide range of communities and youth whose lives they impact every day.

There were over 200 attendees at this year’s conference, with 94 different agencies and organizations represented.
Principal Elizabeth Dozier addressed the conference attendees as kindred spirits, recognizing and praising the work that is done every day against insurmountable odds: shaping communities, motivating teens even when feeling weary yourself, and influencing the trajectories of so many lives.

She walked us through her search for the secret that divides success and failure, concluding that it’s not a cataclysmic event but rather a series of small everyday decisions, collaborations, and practices.

She emphasized the importance of understanding context as she introduced us to Fenger and her 1,400 students, as they were when she first met them. The decks were stacked against

Fenger: 300 arrests on the school property in one year, 4 out of 10 students graduating, 20% dropout rate, 3rd-4th grade reading level for incoming freshmen, 50% of students were-homeless, and high rates of poverty.

Dozier highlighted her view of traumatized youth as the majority of students and the types of decisions to effect change that she made accordingly. Tangible goals, such as improving attendance or grades, for each student needed to be made clear, utilizing partnerships and resources to best serve each child. This effort required collaboration among the school, families, and community organizations on how to provide the best help.

Building support for the kids involved creating care teams (social workers, parole officers, and teachers), reaching out to families, creating “jobs” for the students, and utilizing counseling groups at Fenger during the school day. She also highlighted Fenger’s implementation of the restorative justice program.

With each of these changes made, Fenger began to turn around: 9 out of 10 students graduating, less than 2% dropout rate, arrests down 95%, and attendance up to 89%.

Dozier revisited the difference between success and failure, calling attention to the way that adults in a school organize themselves as highly important. She concluded by urging the audience and those that they serve to use their imaginations as they try to drive change: “The future isn’t someplace you go, it’s someplace you create.”
This year’s conference participants enjoyed a special performance addressing community violence and other issues affecting urban communities from the perspective of local youth.
L.Y.R.I.C (Let Your Rhymes Inspire Creativity), a Chicago based platform for expression that allows a safe space and positive environment for teens and young adults, provided attendees with several moving and impactful performances.

L.Y.R.I.C. Squad uses poetry, rap, song, and dance to express their insights and experiences pertaining to their lives in urban communities. The performance was led by Teh’Ray Hale, Sr. (artistically known as “Phenom”) who began the performance by engaging attendees in various self-reflection exercises that emphasized individual strengths as well as one’s own role in bringing about change.

Next, national spoken word artist and motivational speaker K.Love performed a powerful and touching poem. K.Love expressed through her poem how urban youth are traumatized as a result of some of their experiences. She explored how trauma often goes unaddressed by adults and other influential individuals, often resulting in those youth becoming “cold” or hardened to the world.

Finally, L.Y.R.I.C. performed a piece highlighting community violence from the youth’s point of view. The youth discussed how their difficulty coping with various traumatic experiences are often written off as mental health issues, and how they wrestle with the pressures of not being overcome by these negative experiences. Attendees left this performance inspired by the ways these youth expressed their resiliency to cope with these difficult experiences through this artistic form of self-expression.

The group hosts a weekly teen night on Tuesdays at 7PM at the KLEO Center, 119 East Garfield, Chicago, IL 60637.

To make donations or contribute to this program, please visit: Lyricmentoringnfp.eventbrite.com
On Behalf of All Conference Attendees, the Urban Youth Trauma Center Staff would Like to Thank the Following Individuals for your Participation in the 2014 YOUTH-CAN Conference Workshop Sessions

**Secondary Trauma: Helping the Helper**
Nicole St. Jean (Northwestern University) and Shawntae Jones (La Rabida)

**Addressing the Impact of Trauma in School and After School Settings**
Tiffany Conroy (Children’s Research Triangle) and Albert Sharp (Habilitative Systems, Incorporated)

**Fostering Resilience Among Juvenile Justice and Gang Involved Youth**
Mark Werner (Cook County Juvenile, Probation and Court Services Department) and Jalon Arthur (Cure Violence)

**Connecting the Dots: Working with Service Systems for Violence Prevention**
Marlita White (Department of Public Health), Jennifer Axelrod (Department of Family Support Services), and Constance Williams (Department of Mental Health)

**Healing Approaches for Caregivers and Youth who are Coping with Trauma and Violence**
Reverend Susan Johnson (Urban Dolorosa and Citizens for Change) and Kendria “K-Love” Harris, Teh’Ray Hale, Sr., and the youth of L.Y.R.I.C.

**Restorative Justice Strategies for Promoting Peace within Communities**
Robert Spicer (Restorative Strategies)
Helping the Helper, a workshop led by Nicole St. Jean and Shawntae Jones, focused on secondary traumatic stress (STS) in providers working with youth exposed to trauma. This workshop helped participants understand ways that supporting trauma survivors can take a toll on youth serving providers.

A brief history of STS was covered, as well as related topics, including burnout and compassion fatigue. Participants were given a case study of a provider to identify risk factors for STS.

Shawntae Jones discussed a personal example of changes she noticed in her behavior after working with trauma survivors and the steps she took to take care of herself. This example was linked to specific self-care strategies for addressing secondary trauma that covered five domains: physical, psychological, affective/cognitive, spiritual, and workplace.

Participants in this workshop then engaged in a progressive muscle relaxation exercise, which was one of several strategies covered by the presenters. The workshop concluded with examples of self-care assessment tools, including a burnout self-assessment, a compassion satisfaction and fatigue scale, and a lifestyle behaviors checklist identifying positive negative coping behaviors.

Addressing the Impact of Trauma in School and Afterschool Settings

Addressing the Impact of Trauma in School and Afterschool Settings workshop was co-presented by Tiffany Conroy, from Children’s Research Triangle and Al Sharp, from Habilitative Systems Incorporated. Ms. Conroy discussed how traumatic experiences negatively affect brain functioning, particularly, memory, cognition, attention, problem solving, and planning. She discussed how impairments in these areas of the brain affect behavior and academic performance in youth. To minimize the negative effects of trauma exposure among youth, Ms. Conroy provided the following strategies for teachers, school staff, and after-school providers: 1) view behaviors using a “trauma lens,” 2) create safety, 3) model for youth self-awareness and coping, 4) build resiliency, and 5) connect youth to resources (e.g., treatment and extracurricular activities). Mr. Sharp discussed the “real world” challenges that schools and after-school programs encounter when trying to adequately meet the needs of youth affected by trauma. He also provided strategies to implement when partnering with schools and after-school programs. One important strategy is to assume a collaborative role and not assume to be an expert of the culture of the school or program with which you are working. Other strategies discussed included building alliances with parents and to view the affected youths’ behavior from a trauma lens.
Fostering Resilience Among Juvenile Justice and Gang Involved Youth

The “Fostering Resilience Among Juvenile Justice and Gang-involved Youth” workshop was led by Mark Werner, Deputy Chief of Cook County Juvenile Probation Department and Jalon Arthur, Interim Director of Cure Violence Illinois. The goal of this workshop was to provide a background for promoting resilience through outreach and violence prevention aimed at youth involved in the juvenile justice system and/or gangs.

Mr. Werner discussed specific ways the juvenile probation department supports resilience through assessment and incorporates strategies to enhance resilience in the clinical services provided to youth on probation. He highlighted the positive outcomes among youth who have been on probation.

Mr. Arthur reviewed the violence crisis intervention and outreach efforts used by Cure Violence that are aimed at reducing shootings and highlighted the positive outcomes associated with its programming. He discussed how hiring members from the community who have experience in gangs is useful in preventing violence and promoting resilience by providing individuals with positive ways to address violence in their community.

The workshop concluded with a Q&A session, including ways in which justice system-related services can collaborate with community outreach services to better promote the resilience and positive outcomes of court- and gang-involved youth.

Connecting the Dots: Working with Service Systems for Violence Prevention

The “Connecting the Dots: Working with Service Systems for Violence Prevention” workshop included three presenters, who provided a public health perspective on violence prevention and trauma intervention. The workshop provided an overview of service system level approaches to violence prevention and trauma intervention in the city of Chicago and highlighted the importance of integration, collaboration, and coordination.

Marlita White from the Department of Public Health discussed the importance of educating the public on the neurological effects of trauma and provided suggestions for taking action. Dr. Jennifer Axelrod from the Department of Family Support Services discussed effective programs in place to provide services which serve as both prevention and intervention (e.g., the Youth Diversion Program). Dr. Constance Williams from the Department of Mental Health provided a broad overview of how systems can connect with each other to provide effective and efficient services to those in need.

These presenters from three different agencies demonstrated how incorporating knowledge from other fields related to trauma and how forming collaborations enhances the quality of services provided to youth and their families.
This workshop highlighted ways to support family members and youth affected by violence. Reverend Susan Johnson from Hyde Park Union Church and Citizens for Change provided valuable insights into the ways in which family members struggle following the loss of a loved one as a result of violence. She also described approaches to offering care and support to survivors.

Kendria Harris (K-Love) and Teh’Ray Hale (Phenom) described important principles to consider when offering mentoring and youth development programs in the community. They highlighted the value of creating personal connections to the youth and the realities that they face.

The workshop concluded with an inspirational spoken word performance by L.Y.R.I.C. Squad Youth, highlighting ways in which youth thrive in the midst of adversity. During the Q&A period, workshop participants had the opportunity to learn more about the youth’s experiences with performing, positive influences on their lives, and additional ways the youth are involved in improving the lives of others in their communities.

Restorative Justice Strategies for Promoting Peace in Communities

The “Restorative Approaches to Promote Peace in the Community” workshop was led by Robert Spicer of Restorative Strategies. He highlighted restorative justice approaches to violence prevention including the purpose, benefits, and challenges associated with implementing restorative justice.

Mr. Spicer shared his experiences learning about and implementing restorative justice approaches at Fenger high school. He described restorative justice as a philosophy rather than a program that needs to be incorporated throughout the culture of an organization. Mr. Spicer demonstrated the importance of restorative justice through interactive exercises with the audience. One exercise demonstrated how both victims and perpetrators of violence have similar needs and feelings in relation to incidents of violence by asking audience members how they felt and what their needs were. Such exercises underscore the importance of enhancing commonalities between perpetrators and victims of violence, who often live in the same communities.
Networking Among Neighborhoods:
Networking Fair and Collaboration Activity

A key element of the YOUTH-CAN initiative is joining forces and forming partnerships and collaborations. This year’s conference focused on building a platform for all types of service providers and community members to work together towards the possibility of building a protective web for youth, families, and communities. The collaboration activity and networking fair provided opportunities for participants to connect with other individuals across roles, service systems, and neighborhoods.

Thank you to the following agencies for hosting a table at the 2014 Networking Fair:

- Presence Behavioral Health
- Apna Ghar
- Children’s Research Triangle
- Habilitative Systems Inc.
- Illinois Childhood Trauma Coalition
- Rape Victim Advocates
- The Ark of St. Sabina

2014 YOUTH-CAN Conference Feedback....

“L.Y.R.I.C. grabbed my mind... talked about real life things in the way our kids are having to live. Keep up the great work!”

“The conference was amazing!!!! Thanks UYTC for all the work that you put into making it happen.”

“The prevention of Restorative Justice is very appealing. I want to implement this in my school.”

“The speech by Principal Dozier was very inspiring.”

“L.Y.R.I.C. was the best part, beautifully strong and wise, very moving.”

“I greatly appreciate the opportunity to go to free conferences, grow as a therapist, and learn how to better advocate for my students.”

YOUTH-CAN RESOURCE DIRECTORY NEEDS YOU!!!

We value your participation in the YOUTH-CAN conference and consider you a resource to our network. By request from previous conference participants, we are creating a Resource Directory as a means to initiate and/or support collaboration among providers. Please click on/copy and paste the link below to complete the on-line form:

https://www.redcap.ihrp.uic.edu/surveys/?s=uP3AsavmDS

YOUR PARTICIPATION IS NEEDED!
REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS!!!

The Urban Youth Trauma Center will be requesting workshop proposals for the 2015 YOUTH-CAN Conference. Please consider being a presenter for the conference in 2015. Proposal applications will be released in January 2015 and electronically sent to all YOUTH-CAN members.

Direct Service and Training Opportunities

UYTC is currently accepting referrals for youth that meet criteria for the STRONG Families or I-CARE treatment interventions. Training opportunities are also available for clinicians interested in learning how to implement STRONG Families, I-CARE, and/or YOUTH-CAN. You may contact uytc@psych.uic.edu for referrals or inquiries about available training opportunities.

STRONG Families is a family systems based intervention for youth with co-occurring disruptive behavior problems and community violence exposure.

I-CARE is a community-based program designed to enhance adolescents’ capacity to regulate emotional and behavioral responses to social environmental stressors. This integrated approach includes strategies from empirically supported treatment programs for traumatic stress as well as substance abuse problems and is adapted from the Trauma Systems Therapy (TST) approach.

The Urban Youth Trauma Center would like to thank all of our center’s funders and conference sponsors for making this conference possible.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), through the National Child Traumatic Stress Network Initiative

Community Mental Health Board of Oak Park Township

Bright Promises Foundation

Cook County Juvenile Probation and Court Services Department

DePaul University Community Mental Health Center

Urban Youth Trauma Center
University of Illinois at Chicago
Institute for Juvenile Research
Email: uytc@psych.uic.edu
Co-Directors: Jaleel Abdul-Adil, PhD & Liza Suarez, PhD