



DHHS

Department of
Health &
Human Services

Together, creating healthy communities.

Wisconsin Bar Association Briefing: Credible Messenger Initiative

April 19, 2021

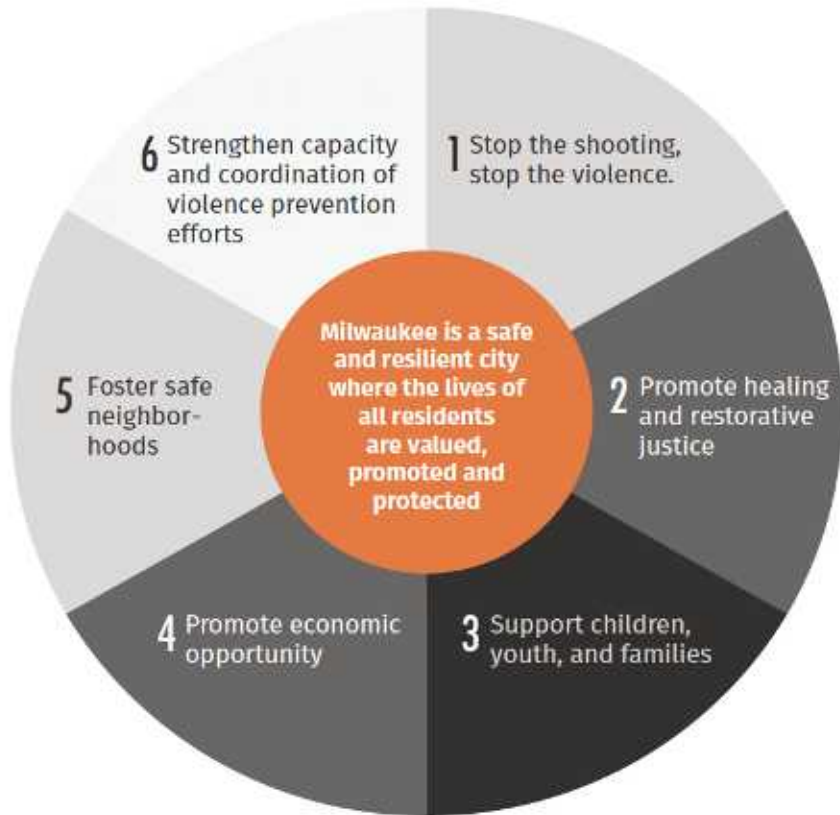
The Problem: How do we establish transformative relationships with youth in the justice system?

Historically, the probation system has focused on enforcing compliance, surveillance of youth, and delivering consequences for violations of court orders. These methods alone have not been effective in assuring community safety, and they fail to promote pro-social engagement or skill development. With the right supports, it is possible to assist our youth in learning adaptive, pro-social skills and in navigating risky social environments safely. This requires the establishment of credible, transformative adult relationships and supports. The Credible Messenger movement demonstrates the power of transformative relationships.

DYFS Credible Messenger Initiative

- Established national Partnerships with Credible Messenger Justice Center (CMJC) and Professional Community Interventionists Training Institute (PCITI)
- 50 local youth interventionists representing 11 community-based organizations participated in a weeklong training in June 2020 by PCITI, establishing our Credible Messenger Learning Cohort
- Learning Cohort engaged in community led outreach efforts in Milwaukee County Parks (We Care Crew) and continue weekly community engagement meetings and monthly professional development check-ins
- 5 agencies who demonstrated administrative and staffing capacity were selected to participate in the 2021 pilot
- Learning Cohort is being led by both DYFS, Wraparound, and OVP staff
- Referral process is now taking place and MOA draft finalized

Blueprint for Peace Goals



- STOP THE SHOOTING. STOP THE VIOLENCE
- PROMOTE HEALING AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE
- SUPPORT CHILDREN, YOUTH, AND FAMILIES
- PROMOTE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY
- FOSTER SAFE NEIGHBORHOODS
- STRENGTHEN CAPACITY AND COORDINATION OF VIOLENCE PREVENTION EFFORTS

DHHS Public Safety Framework

FRAMEWORK

Primary Prevention	Secondary Prevention	Tertiary Prevention
<p>1. Investment across social determinants (e.g. housing, youth jobs, school partnership). These investments promote security of neighborhoods by investing in economic opportunity, fostering safe and strong neighborhoods, advancing healthy development, and supporting youth and families while preventing conditions associated with lack of public safety.</p> <p>2. Community capacity building ensures neighborhoods are led by community members, thereby fostering safe and strong neighborhoods and creating secure environments that promote resident connections while finding health alternatives.</p>	<p>3. Alternative crisis responses and trusted outreach aid de-escalation and tailor rapid intervention in <u>potentially-harmful</u> episodes where clinical services are more relevant than law enforcement; in instances of wellness checks and other outreach, focus is on navigation and trust, rather than punitive measures.</p> <p>4. Healing / family supports following crisis ensure that families and communities <u>are able to</u> respond and heal in a state of crisis, so that conflict resolution can follow rather than escalation and harmful interactions with law enforcement.</p>	<p>5. Re-entry supports for youths and adults in detention or incarceration in efforts to access housing, social connections, and basic needs can stabilize community engagement and reduce recidivism.</p> <p>6. Restorative and community justice policies that will focus on reconciliation rather than punitive elements will help individuals and communities heal from trauma and avoid substance abuse, violence, and social isolation.</p>

Credible Messenger Initiative Definitions

- **Credible Messengers** - Experienced transformative mentors; able to connect with families, communities, and leaders to prevent and interrupt violence/neighborhood trauma; Able to create space for positive youth engagement & community voice; and change agent for racial equity and policy on issues that plague the youth, families and community.
- **Credible Messenger Agencies** – RUNNING REBELS (RR), 414LIFE, YOUTH ADVOCATE PROGRAM (YAP), MILWAUKEE CHRISTIAN CENTER (MCC), WESTCARE
- **24/7** - Credible Messengers are available to respond to youth dysregulation, parent/child conflict, community violence involving referred person and other situations deemed critical to the well-being and safety of Milwaukee County youth.
- **Uniformity** - All agencies will operate according to the MOU. All Credible Messengers will have an ID Badge and be in uniform while on duty.

Credible Messenger Referral Process

Criteria for Youth Enrollment (youth must meet at least one)

- Committed at least one Felony [**Firearm, Auto Theft, Group Based Violence including Party to A Crime (PTAC), Physical Violence & Previous Injury**]
- Self-selected diversion- Disposition of Consent Decree or Deferred Prosecution.
- Disconnected from school and work resulting in increased risky behavior.
- Unresponsive to Human Service Worker and social-services professionals.
- Community Based referral (**ages 13-20 yrs. old**) from DYFS youth siblings, DYFS youth friends, and identified youth / young adults by Credible Messenger agency.
- Other self-selected diversion

Credible Messenger Partner Agencies

Agency Referral Assignment- Referrals will be submitted based on agency programming:

- Running Rebels – Mentoring High-Risk Youth
- Youth Advocate Program– Transformative Mentoring
- Milwaukee Christian Center – School-Based Violence Intervention
- 414 Life – Community Violence Prevention and Intervention
- Westcare – Youth Leadership & Family Well-Being

Proposed Metrics and Outcomes

Outcomes measured for all 5 agencies:

- Successful completion of the case plan for youth assigned to them
- No re-injury of youth
- No additional involvement in gun violence
- No additional gun related charges
- Tracking involvement in pro-social supports (during and after court/DYFS involvement)

Self-Selected Youth Intervention...Not Intensive Supervision

- The Credible Messenger Transformative Mentoring Initiative is self selected by the youth and not a supervision program. They are natural supports to youth, family members, friends and those individuals that may cause less favorable influence on the youth.
- A Credible Messenger is an adult with lived experience that can more easily relate with youth who have experienced trauma resulting in high-risk behavior and/or Supervision under the juvenile justice system.
- This can **only be done with community connections and not be connected to court proceedings.** Credible Messengers do not track, monitor, or supervise GPS programming and should not be used in this manner.
- HSW's will have access to weekly Credible Messenger reports and can report out on the progress of the youth during a court proceeding.

Resources

Credible Messenger Justice Center: <https://cmjcenter.org>

Professional Community Intervention Training Institute: www.pciti.net

District of Columbia Division of Youth Rehabilitation Services: [Credible Messenger Initiative | dyrs \(dc.gov\)](#)