

Violence Prevention & Awareness

May 2021

Executive Summary

The number one issue Chicagoland families face is exposure to violence. Data shows us that exposure to violence has significant negative consequences regarding health. By adding violence prevention and awareness to JLC's signature issues, this is another vehicle to improve health & wellness outcomes for the communities that we serve.

Based on growing bodies of research, chronic exposure to traumatic stress places thousands of Chicagoland's youths at risk of anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, sleep disturbance, and somatization. If left untreated, these symptoms can lead to the use of maladaptive coping mechanisms and behaviors such as drug use, academic failure, self-harm, bullying, gang involvement, incarceration, and premature death.

To reduce violence in various forms, prevention, education, & awareness are crucial. Past exposure to trauma is a significant driver of future dangerous behaviors.

The long-term effects of being exposed to violence at home, in schools, and in communities are multifaceted:

- Children exposed to violence between parents or intimate partners appear to be at increased risk of many of the same adverse mental health outcomes associated with childhood victimization.
- The fear, anxiety, and elevated stress that students experience as a result of a violent school atmosphere have severe psychological health consequences
- There is a strong link between exposure to violence and social disadvantage leading to poor health
- Stress-related to feeling unsafe in one's neighborhood can have adverse health effects throughout life and may even influence subsequent generations.
- Although violence occurs across the socioeconomic continuum, the risks of exposure to violence are most significant for people in the most socioeconomically disadvantaged groups and communities.

Who are the target populations/demographics the JLC hopes to serve?

The Junior League of Chicago is committed to providing tools and resources, training opportunities, or programming to assist in the effort to prevent domestic violence and sexual violence/exploitation of at-risk women & children and exposure to violence at a young age, and support survivor rehabilitation to strengthen the family unit.

Background - Impacts of Trauma due to Adverse Childhood Experiences

Exposure to violence early in life can have lifelong effects because so much of a child's development happens in the first five years. According to the Erikson Institute, children exposed to chronic violence can become fearful, demonstrate aggression, have anxiety, depression, sadness, and have difficulty feeling secure.

The percentage of Chicagoland's children under the age of 5 who live in areas with an above-median number of homicides grew from 54% in 2016 to 60% in 2018. Children can enter kindergarten having already learned how to settle disputes with violence.

The connection between early childhood adversity and adverse health outcomes has long been known. A 1998 study of patients in the Kaiser Permanente health system in San Diego established a link between childhood adversity and poor health behaviors and outcomes. However, that study did not ask respondents about community violence. Research over the last 20 years, very often citing the 1998 study, has also established a link between adverse outcomes and childhood exposure to things like domestic violence, substance abuse, incarceration of parents, or a parent's death.

Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is a form of modern-day slavery in which traffickers use force, fraud, or coercion to control victims for the purpose of engaging in commercial sex acts or labor services against his/her will.¹ After drug dealing, human trafficking is often tied with arms dealing as the second-largest criminal industry in the world.^{2,3} While a global concern, the epidemic is close to home as O'Hare Airport, the world's fourth-busiest airport, and Illinois' proximity to federal interstates creates a conducive environment to bring victims into Illinois and transfer them to other cities and states. This environment also makes it difficult for authorities to enforce anti-trafficking measures and rescue victims. As a result, Chicago has the third-highest levels of human trafficking in the country.⁴

In 2016, the Junior League of Chicago began their partnership with Traffick Free to support the fight against human trafficking. Since then, the Freeing Individuals from Human Trafficking (FIHT) committee was formed and the committee has grown to include additional community partnerships. The Junior League of Chicago helps these partner organizations reach more survivors and volunteers. The program's objective is to work with external partners in the Chicagoland area and internal JLC committees to combat human trafficking through volunteerism, education, and advocacy. The JLC is working with Chicago-based anti-Human Trafficking organizations to mobilize the Chicagoland area, with the ultimate goal of eradicating human trafficking and increasing survivor resources. The FIHT committee provides educational



opportunities for league members and the public, including documentary movie screenings, lectures, panels, and JLCUs.

Further opportunity for involvement could include collaboration between FIHT, Advocacy, and Fund Development committees to organize an event during Advocacy Week that emphasizes public awareness and legal initiatives in place to combat human trafficking, going the next step beyond direct volunteer opportunities. Additionally, given that a large part of the problem is societal stereotypes, lack of empathy, and a lack of awareness of trafficking victimization, the JLC is launching a Human Trafficking awareness & fundraising campaign called the Little Black Dress Initiative in May 2021.

Biggest Issues Facing Chicagoland's Kids - Bullying

A statewide survey of junior high and high school youth in Illinois found that 38 percent of students had been bullied, and 13 percent of them were what was classified as "intensely bullied" (i.e., reported was all types of bullying: name-calling, threats, physical, or online). Additionally, a national study of youth risk behaviors conducted by the Center for Disease Control found that 21 percent of Illinois high school students stated they had been bullied on school property, and 17 percent had been electronically bullied.

Exposure to Gun Violence

According to public city data, the city had 577 homicides in 2018, 672 in 2017, and close to 800 in 2016.

The increase in the number of children exposed to homicides comes even though the city's population is dropping, and the total number of homicides is slowly reducing. Some 12,000 Chicagoland kids under the age of 5 live in communities with more than 30 homicides in 2018, including the Austin, Englewood, and North Lawndale communities. About 55,000 children under the age of 5 lived in the 20 communities with more than ten homicides in 2018.

Exposure to Domestic Violence

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, children witness 68% to 80% of domestic assaults, which can profoundly impact a child's psyche. Additionally, there is a 45% to 60% chance of co-occurring child abuse in homes where violence between partners occurs, a rate 15 times higher than the average.

Exposure to domestic violence can lead to many problems for children, including psychological problems such as habitual lying, emotional distancing, and fear of harm or abandonment. Kids who have witnessed domestic violence also experience a greater incidence of insomnia,



bedwetting, learning difficulties, and self-harm than other kids. Most concerning, boys who have witnessed DV are more likely to become DV offenders as adults, and girls are more likely to become victims (Brown and Bzostek, 2003).

The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study led by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has classified exposure to DV as one of several adverse childhood experiences contributing to poor quality of life, premature death, and risk factors for many of the most common causes of death in the United States.

Opportunities for Involvement

There are protective factors that can mitigate the impacts of violence on children, including child literacy and whether the child has safe and supportive relationships with at least one influential adult. (Carlson, 2000; Edleson, 2011; Hughes, et al., 2001).

Within the JLC, we will work to enhance coordination between committees, including Advocacy, Marketing, Strategy, Project Development, and Community. This collaboration, both internally & with external partners, will enable us to offer resources and necessary support to children and families in the community with the hopes of promoting awareness and education with the hope of reducing the effects of trauma associated with exposure to violence at a young age.

New for 2021, the JLC is launching The Little Black Dress Initiative, a week-long fundraising and awareness campaign that leverages the power of social media to bring awareness to critical community issues and Junior League of Chicago initiatives.

Participants wear the same little black dress (or any all-black outfit) all week to spark conversation. This year is the first that The Junior League of Chicago will formally participate in the national campaign. In alignment with our Signature Issues, the JLC's participation will highlight our focus on combatting human trafficking in and around the Chicagoland area.

JLC members and supporters will wear the same black dress, outfit, or blouse for five (5) consecutive days. By wearing a button or virtual background that reads "Ask Me About My Dress," JLC members invite dialogue among colleagues, friends, and strangers to raise awareness about Human Trafficking and other critical JLC-focused issue areas in and around Chicagoland.

Closing

The Junior League of Chicago is committed to addressing and combating the traumatic effect of exposure to violence across Chicago. By partnering with local organizations working to promote awareness and education to reduce violence and lessen the impact of exposure to violence in children, we will work to improve the lives of those impacted.

Relevant Legislation

A. H.R.0004 - Toxic Stress - Childhood

Sponsor:	Maurice A. West, II (Introduced 01/13/2021)
Committees:	House - Mental Health and Addiction Committee
Latest Action:	Assigned to Mental Health and Addiction Committee
Summary:	Acknowledges that toxic stress and adverse childhood experiences can have significantly negative short-term, long-term, and generational impacts and that early interventions through trauma-informed care is the most efficient and cost-effective way to combat these impacts. Urges the Illinois General Assembly to seek out opportunities to enhance legislation through the science of resiliency and a trauma-informed lens and funding around early intervention services for children and families that centers the principles of brain development, the intimate connection between mental and physical health, and the concepts of toxic stress and adverse childhood experiences.

Link:

<https://www.ilga.gov/legislation/BillStatus.asp?DocNum=4&GAID=16&DocTypeID=HR&LegID=127803&SessionID=110&GA=102&SpecSess=0>

B. H.R.0001 - Illiana Task Force Act

Sponsor:	Thaddeus Jones and Joyce Mason (Introduced 01/13/2021)
Committees:	House - Rules Committee
Latest Action:	Re-assigned to Rules Committee, added co-sponsor Rep. Joyce Mason
Summary:	Creates the Illiana Task Force, consisting of 24 police officers, appointed by the Director of the Illinois State Police. Provides that the members of the Task Force shall select a chairperson. Provides that members of the Task Force shall receive no compensation for their service on the Task Force but shall be reimbursed for necessary expenses incurred in the performance of

their duties from appropriations made by the General Assembly for that purpose. Provides that the Task Force shall meet at least once monthly to study ways to reduce violence in local communities caused by the illegal use of firearms and to make recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly on suggested legislative solutions to this problem. Provides that the Task Force shall submit an annual report to the Governor and the General Assembly on or before December 31 of each year and a final report five years after the creation of the Task Force. Provides that the Task Force shall be dissolved six years after its creation. Provides that the Act is repealed on January 1, 2027. Effective immediately.

Link:

<https://www.ilga.gov/legislation/BillStatus.asp?DocNum=1&GAID=16&DocTypeID=HB&LegID=127804&SessionID=110&GA=102&SpecSess=0>

C. H.R.0028 - Crisis Intervention Training

Sponsor: [Maurice A. West, II](#) - [Marcus C. Evans, Jr.](#), [Nicholas K. Smith](#), [Lindsey LaPointe](#) and [Natalie A. Manley](#) (Introduced 01/13/2021)

Committees: House - Rules Committee

Latest Action: Re-assigned to Rules Committee, added co-sponsor Rep. Joyce Mason

Summary: Amends the Illinois Police Training Act. Provides that the curriculum for certified training programs in crisis intervention shall be at least 40 hours for recruit law enforcement officers. Provides that Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training programs shall be a collaboration between law enforcement professionals, mental health providers, families, and consumer advocates and must minimally include the following components: (1) basic information about mental illnesses and how to recognize them; (2) information about mental health laws and resources; (3) learning from family members of individuals with mental illness and their experiences, and (4) verbal de-escalation training and role-plays. Amends the Criminal and Traffic Assessment Act. Provides that a person who is convicted of any criminal or traffic law or ordinance, other than a conviction entered upon a plea of guilty, \$5 to be distributed as follows: (1) \$2.50 to the Illinois Law Enforcement Training Standards Board for implementing crisis intervention team training for recruit law enforcement officers under the Illinois Police

Training Act; (2) \$2.25 to the Illinois Law Enforcement Training Standards Board for grants to local law enforcement agencies for continued crisis intervention team training; and (3) 25 cents to be retained by the Clerk of the Circuit Court for administrative expenses. Effective July 1, 2021.

Link:

<https://www.ilga.gov/legislation/BillStatus.asp?DocNum=28&GAID=16&DocTypeID=HB&LegID=127839&SessionID=110&GA=102&SpecSess=0>

D. S.2916 - Runaway and Homeless Youth and Trafficking Prevention Act of 2019

Sponsor: [Sen. Leahy, Patrick J. \[D-VT\]](#) (Introduced 11/20/2019)

Committees: Senate - Judiciary

Latest Action: Senate - 11/20/2019 Read twice and referred to the Committee on the Judiciary.

Summary: This bill modifies and reauthorizes through FY2025 the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act, which provides community-based services for runaway or homeless youth who are in need of temporary shelter, counseling, or aftercare services. Specifically, the bill makes grants for centers and services for five-year terms and such grants must include trauma-informed and culturally-competent services, as appropriate.

Grant recipients must make services accessible to runaway or homeless youth who are victims of sexual abuse, exploitation, or trafficking. Grant recipients also must collect, and keep confidential, specified aggregated data about the demographics of program participants. The bill requires grants for home-based services to (1) include suicide prevention, (2) provide staff training about trauma-informed care, and (3) ensure eligibility for youth at risk of separation from their family. The bill also revises and expands the transition living grants program to provide five-year grants to support long-term residential services for older homeless youth.

Additionally, the bill requires the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to coordinate with specified agencies to deliver programs for runaway and homeless youth and provide five-year grants for technical assistance to regional nonprofit organizations to implement trauma-informed programs for such youth. Further, the bill authorizes five-year grants for the sexual abuse prevention program and the national communications system to connect runaway and homeless youth with their families and service providers.

The bill also prioritizes grants for research and evaluation projects that



examine the intersection of human trafficking and youth homelessness populations, among other provisions.

Link: <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/2916/text?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22human+trafficking%22%5D%7D&r=64&s=2>

Sources:

1. <https://humantraffickinghotline.org/type-trafficking/human-trafficking>
2. Tanagho, J. (2007). New Illinois legislation combats modern-day slavery: a comparative analysis of Illinois anti-trafficking law with its federal and state counterparts. Loyola University Chicago Law Journal, 38.
3. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/nicolefisher/2017/04/24/human-trafficking-in-plainsight/#1f9a720451f8>
4. <https://www.thechicagocouncil.org/event/combating-human-trafficking>
5. <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/breaking/ct-chicago-children-violence-homicide-trauma-20190715-4fp2kqtaprgjvht6cl6ihsply4-story.html>
6. <https://icija.illinois.gov/researchhub/articles/child-and-youth-exposure-to-violence-in-illinois>
7. <https://abc7chicago.com/study-chicago-children-exposed-to-violence-on-the-rise/5396911/>
8. <https://abc7chicago.com/chicago-crime-children-exposed-to-violence-on-the-rise-homicide/5396911/>
9. <https://undergroundrailroadinc.org/human-trafficking.html>
10. <https://fathermatters.org/alarming-effects-of-childrens-exposure-to-domestic-violence/>
11. <https://www.billtrack50.com/billdetail/1269318>
12. <https://legiscan.com/IL/drafts/HR0004/2021>
13. <https://www.ilga.gov/legislation/102/HB/10200HB0001.htm>
14. <https://www.billtrack50.com/billdetail/1269041>