



Strengthening Chicago's Youth

Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago

2015-2016 Policy Agenda

Strengthening Chicago's Youth (SCY) supports public policies that will prevent violence and build resilience among our youth. These policies generally share the following principles:

- Developmental approach that recognizes how violence emerges over the life course and the impact of trauma on development.
- Ecological approach which notes that violence and its solutions occur at the individual, family, community, and societal levels.
- Knowledge that each child, family, and community is unique.
- Recognition that it is better to keep a child or family from being exposed to violence than to treat the effects of exposure.
- Strength-based approach that focuses more on development of assets and skills than on remedy of deficits.
- Acknowledgement that violence prevention requires involvement from many different disciplines.
- Emphasis on data including encouragement of strong surveillance, use of local data, evidence-based policies, and evaluation.
- Attention paid to enhancing existing infrastructures, sustainability, implementation, and funding.
- Participation of the people and organizations most affected by the policy in its development.
- Acceptance of the fact that violence cannot be addressed without addressing race, segregation, gender, sexual orientation, and poverty.
- Basis in social justice, ensuring that potential negative effects of policies should not be borne disproportionately by already oppressed populations.

For 2015-2016, SCY will focus on supporting the following policy recommendations. This list was prioritized by members of the SCY collaborative on the basis of timeliness, implementation and political feasibility, importance, and alignment with SCY's policy principles.

1. Develop strategies to build needed capacity for community-based organizations in high-need areas to deliver quality programs for youth and families.
2. Reduce use of disciplinary practices that remove children from school in Chicago Public Schools and promote approaches that foster supportive school climates.
3. Prioritize community-based alternatives to detention and incarceration and reinvest funds from reductions in detention into community-based alternatives, prevention, and early intervention.
4. Raise public awareness of how positive parenting contributes to academic and family success, including working to remove the stigma on parenting classes.
5. Continue to invest in evidence-based youth employment programs and out-of-school time activities that prevent violence and build resilience in our youth.
6. Implement sustainable funding mechanisms for school-based mental health services and promotion, including standardized screening, connection to services, and outcome tracking.
7. Require that all publicly funded child-facing organizations provide their staff with training on violence and trauma, including topics such as early signs of psychological distress; mental health promotion; risk factors for violence including trauma, discrimination, and poverty; and protective factors against violence.
8. Support gun violence prevention policies that have been shown to make a difference, including anti-trafficking laws and enforcement measures and evidence-based approaches to keep guns from dangerous people.
9. Adopt a core set of outcome measures for each type of human services program (e.g. youth development, mental health) to be used by public and private funders.
10. Support juvenile justice policies in all settings that reflect evidence regarding adolescent development, including knowledge about the impact of trauma.