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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 9, 2024

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**MAYOR BRANDON JOHNSON, MAYOR'S OFFICE OF COMMUNITY SAFETY,
CHICAGO DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS
LAUNCH CYCLE BREAKERS YOUTH SAFETY INITIATIVE**

Cycle Breakers Resource Hub offers conflict resolution, mentorship, and other resources to keep youth engaged and safe over the summer

CHICAGO — Today, Mayor Brandon Johnson, in collaboration with the Mayor's Office of Community Safety and the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH), announced the launch of [Cycle Breakers](#), a youth safety initiative designed to disrupt cycles of violence. Cycle Breakers is a community-led initiative under Mayor Johnson's [People's Plan for Community Safety](#), which leverages the full force of government to provide much-needed resources to the communities most impacted by poverty, crime, and disinvestment.

"For far too long, senseless violence has harmed the very fabric and soul of our communities. The Cycle Breakers movement calls on all Chicagoans to engage in building safer communities and a safer city by ending these cycles of violence," said **Mayor Brandon Johnson**. "It is a comprehensive and purposeful approach that provides tangible tools for Chicagoans to help disrupt the harm that many are experiencing, and live the long and fruitful lives that our residents and families deserve."

Cycle Breakers aims to empower youth, adults, and community leaders in Chicago's South and West sides with resources, tools, and an enhanced sense of culture and belonging to break from destructive patterns. The initiative is the City's first-ever behavioral change initiative focused on community safety, combining the power of behavioral science and community collaboration. It has three key objectives:

- Support youth in building conflict resolution skills by providing accessible resources, educational opportunities, and supportive networks to foster growth and engagement.



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- Assist parents, mentors, teachers, coaches, and other caregivers in meeting basic needs, reducing stress, and creating a supportive environment for youth.
- Partner with key community stakeholders to offer resources for youth and caregivers and increase opportunities for community members to participate in efforts to drive change in Chicago's communities.

“Gun-related violence is the second largest contributor to the racial life expectancy gap in Chicago. It’s a true public health crisis that will take everyone - from government to community leaders, caregivers, and youth - to tackle effectively. The Cycle Breakers movement is an opportunity for the residents of Chicago to take active steps to a safer and healthier city,” said **Olusimbo 'Simbo' Ige, MD, MPH, Commissioner of the Chicago Department of Public Health.**

Planning and development began in 2022, fueled by community leaders advocating for a culture-building and behavioral change initiative that complements existing people- and place-based investments and strategies for community safety. The Cycle Breakers initiative was co-created with the community, incorporating the concept of culture wellness defined as the unique, authentic expression of the values and principles that lead to the long-term health and well-being of particular people, as well as behavioral science research on the adult protective shield, defined as the ecosystem of stakeholders who protect and sustain the growth of a child, resulting in an increased sense of wellbeing.

“The concept of the adult protective shield and the various elements associated with culture wellness are evidenced-based, having been proven to work when implemented on their own and in cooperation with other community focused approaches,” said **Tewodros Josef (TJ) Crawford, Founder, Institute for Culture Wellness, and Managing Executive Director, South Shore Works Planning and Preservation Coalition.** “This behavior change marketing campaign is intended to cut through the clutter, champion the ongoing efforts of a diverse array of wellness practitioners and deploy the resources available to individuals working to break the cycles that keep people and the communities we live in in a state of disrepair. As a city, we have to first believe we can heal what ails us. The next necessary thing is for us to consistently and cooperatively work together in order to do so.”

Over 200 youth from high-opportunity communities were actively involved in developing Cycle Breakers. They participated in focus groups to share community insights, provided feedback on campaign iterations, and created artwork, which was later incorporated into a mural by Chicago artist Haman Cross III. Cross, a renowned artist committed to community collaboration and cultural enrichment, unveiled the



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mural at the Cycle Breakers launch event. Youth and community leaders who contributed to the campaign were in attendance to celebrate the official kickoff.

"As part of the Cycle Breakers initiative, I had the pleasure of talking with young people from different communities about what safety means to them and what they think we need in order to break negative cycles of violence," said **Haman Cross III, Chicago Muralist, Artist, and Community Engagement Advocate**. "They expressed themselves creatively and, produced many art pieces that we later incorporated into a mural installation. This piece is a direct testament of our Chicago youth, the message they want to share and how they see a Chicago without violence."

"The Cycle Breakers campaign incorporates voices of youth from communities that are directly impacted by high violence. The campaign was informed by Englewood youth in particular, highlighting their voice and wisdom as potential cycle breakers," said **Cecile De Mello, Executive Director at Teamwork Englewood**. "Cycle Breakers is a great example in community-informed initiatives, embodying robust engagement, a deep understanding of youth needs, and cross-community collaboration."

Cycle Breakers is the result of partnerships with key community stakeholders and various city entities. Understanding that connecting people with resources and meeting them where they are is crucial to success, the Chicago Department of Public Health through the Community Safety Coordination Center has forged a partnership between My Chi My Future, Playstreets, United Way of Metro Chicago, and Chicago Community Health Response Corps, among others. These collaborations ensure a holistic approach to addressing the challenges faced by individuals and communities.

Cycle Breakers is launching with a resource hub promoting conflict resolution and restorative justice, educating around culture wellness and mental health, supporting crisis intervention, bridging the generational divide through mentoring, and connecting youth and adults with proper resources. Cycle Breakers is a call for all Chicagoans who want a safe and healthy city to take an active role in rejecting violence and advocating for community safety.

The Cycle Breakers movement will expand throughout the summer with various community events and opportunities for youth and adults to get connected to organizations and resources in their community. Stay up to date and access Cycle Breakers resources and community events at chicago.gov/CycleBreakers.



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