

Youth Violence Intervention

Restorative Conferencing in Inner City Albany NY

PRESENTATION OVERVIEW

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INTRODUCTIONS

YVIRC Conference Facilitators:

John Cutro

- **IIRP Facilitator/Trainer**
- **Former NYS Homicide Investigator/Victim Liaison in Death Penalty Cases**
- **Private Investigator**
- **Former Forensic Case Manager**

Brother Yusuf Abdul Wasi Burgess

- **IIRP Facilitator**
- **NYS ENCON Environmental Educator**
- **Former Gang Prevention Coordinator**
- **Former Forensic Case Manager**

Dennis Mosley

- **IIRP Facilitator**
- **NYS OASAS “Communities that Care” Consultant**
- **Former VT DOCS Intensive Substance Abuse Program Clinical Supervisor**
- **Former Forensic Case Manager**

HOW “YVIRC” GOT STARTED

- **DA/Judicial Request for Serious Offense RP Response to 2003 Felony Youth Slashing**
- **30 Days Post-Conf: “Supersize that brawl ?”**
- **SAME DAY as McDonalds Conf: Locks in Socks (Injured Conf. Partic. is Orig. Slashing Victim)**
- **One month later: Fight at Arbor Hill Community Center with Gun Threat by Parent**

- **Link Charting: Incident Clusters with Deep Roots, Including Homicides**
- **Past Conference Participants Request Conferences To “Handle It Themselves”**
- **PLMA Middle School Hosts “The Jerry Springer School of Restorative Practice”**
- **Began on pro-bono consultant basis**
- **\$5000 from Rhodes Memorial Fund**
- **\$5000 from Buxmont/IIRP (bridge)**
- **\$8000 Trinity Institution via Albany County DSS/NYS DCJS Grant**
- **\$2500 from Trinity Institution**
- **All \$20,500 Currently Exhausted**

APPROACH & PRACTICE ADAPTATIONS

- **Culturally Competent Assertive
Community Outreach**
- **Serious Offense Model Face-To-Face
Pre-Conferencing**
- **CLUSTERS of Cross Linked Incidents
involving a core of youth, adults and
families**
- **Last Year's Offender is Yesterday's
Victim is Today's Offender is ...**
- **“Victim” and “Offender” Lose
Meaning, Individual Acceptance of
Responsibility and Stories Don't**

- **Incidents Rarely “In The System”**
- **System responses are narrowly “case” focused, often triggering more cyclic retribution**
- **“Healing Circles” for family and community affected by fatal violence**
- **Facilitating micro & wider community restorative intervention at the “Epicenter of Many Epicenters” becomes the practice challenge**
- **TRUST THE PARTICIPANTS to construct their own culturally relevant processes within the conferencing container, and sometimes way, way outside of it by some practice standards**

Pre/Conference Questions/Comments

- **DO EXPLAIN** you are the only one there that has no business being there
- **DON'T EXPLAIN** the process, **DO IT** (RP Advocate Recovery Step)
- **Skip intros, everybody knows or discovers connections on the fly**
- **I sometimes start with appreciative inquiry: What are you like when you are at your best as a parent/youth/etc.**
- **What Happened? What part can you take personal responsibility for?**
- **What were you thinking at the time? Since? Who was affected? How?**

- **What was the hardest thing for you (personally/as a parent)?**
- **If something good could come of this, what would that look like to you?**
- **DOORKNOB QUESTION: When I/you walk out that door, what (understandings) are you taking with you that you didn't walk in with?**
VITAL COMMUNITY CEMENT
- **Snacks available during/after conference**
- **Agreements are oral, if at all, paper means little or nothing, relationship transformation leading to new understandings prevents violence**

Sometimes in pre-conferencing with youth and parents:

- **Who here doesn't want to be a punk? (Punks Anonymous Meetings)**
- **What's the hardest thing about being a punk? (Some parent's are very surprised by complex answers)**
- **Do you identify as a warrior? What is the function of a warrior in society?**
- **Most answer "huh?" or "to fight!" A few get "to protect my people" (if youth get it, it is usually limited to protection of their set/gang/family)**
- **Am I "your people"? Nope. If someone with an AK-47 comes in here to snuff you and I have an AK-47, am I "your people"? Yup. (Context!)**

**35 CLUSTERS OVER 22 MONTHS
(25 Addressed Directly or Indirectly)**

**17 Conferences (One conference may
address several or even 20+ incidents)**

8 Addressed Directly or Indirectly

5 By A Subsequent Conference

2 Remain Open, Conf. Possible

1 By School Disciplinary Process

10 Met with Barriers

2 Juv Detention / Fam Court Confid

2 Unable to ID/Contact

2 Refused Participation (1 was shot)

1 Fam Court Dropped Felony Chgs

1 Family Request/Deceased Victim

1 Civil Litigation

1 Incarceration re Fatal Stabbing

35 Total Incidents/Clusters Attempted

17 YVIRC CONFERENCES

DATE	#	DESCRIPTION
02/19/05	28	Felony Slashing
03/31/05	31	McDonalds Fight
05/12/05	18	Community Center Fight
05/23/05	9	High School Fight
10/28/05	36	Goon Squad Fight
11/09/05	28	Homicide Healing Circle
12/02/05	9	School Fight re Homicide
01/19/06	14	Recruitment Stabbing
02/02/06	10	Bats & Knives
03/17/06	16	Pepsi Arena Fight
04/04/06	15	Fight Over Boys
04/05/06	10	Grammar School Fight
05/25/06	24	Rape Allegation Rumor
06/22/06	10	Two Middle Schools
08/31/06	5	Trinity Prevention
10/12/06	8	Fight Outside School
10/13/06	10	Cafeteria Fight

22 Months 281 Conference Participant

REACHING FOR A TIPPING POINT ? Verification, Learning & Understanding

- **Violence is a contagious epidemic**
- **Understanding is a contagious epidemic**
- **CLOSE, AFFECTIVE CONTACT is required for both to spread effectively and efficiently**
- **Attempted conferencing is just as important as completed conferences**
- **During 22 months of attempting 35 and completing 17 conferences ONLY around 15 youth, mostly promising and troubled young women, appear more than once or twice on the incident cluster link charts**

- **The situation is not as large or hopeless as it appears on the surface**
- **It is NOT ALL “Gang Related” !!!**
- **If we don’t fill the vacuum our society offers to youth, especially inner city youth, they will fill it because it meets a basic human need for connection, belonging and community**
- **We will be collaborating with the Council for Unity to bring all groups together to freely express emotion without fear of “being next” for showing vulnerability**

**CONFERENCE VIDEO CLIPS
(IIRP Documentary in Production)**

QUESTIONS & DISCUSSION

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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