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!)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cluster Description</th>
<th>Count</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CLUSTERS OVER 22 MONTHS (25 Addressed Directly or Indirectly)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conferences (One conference may address several or even 20+ incidents)</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Addressed Directly or Indirectly</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>By A Subsequent Conference</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Remain Open, Conf. Possible</td>
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<tr>
<td>By School Disciplinary Process</td>
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<td>Met with Barriers</td>
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<td>Juv Detention / Fam Court Confid</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unable to ID/Contact</td>
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<td>Refused Participation (1 was shot)</td>
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<td>Fam Court Dropped Felony Chgs</td>
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<td>Family Request/Deceased Victim</td>
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<td>Civil Litigation</td>
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<td>Incarceration re Fatal Stabbing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Incidents/Clusters Attempted</td>
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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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