



Strengthening Chicago's Youth (SCY) is convened by Ann & Robert H. Lurie Children's Hospital of Chicago to address the factors of violence that impact the health and safety of Chicago youth. SCY [focuses on five interrelated key priorities](#) to build communities' and families' capacity and skills to raise safe, resilient, emotionally healthy youth. The 2023-2024 policy agenda is supported by principles that were prioritized by the SCY partners and is reflective of goals that can be achieved within SCY's purview.

2023-2024 Policy Agenda Principles

- Developmental approach that recognizes how violence emerges over the life course and the impact of trauma on development.
- Ecological approach that violence and its solutions occur at the individual, family, community, and societal levels.
- Recognition of the intersection of many forms of violence, including child maltreatment, teen dating violence, intimate partner violence, sexual violence, community violence, and bullying.
- Knowledge that each child, family, and community is unique.
- Recognition that it is better to keep a child or family from being exposed to all forms of violence than to treat the effects of exposure.
- Strength-based approach that focuses on development of assets and skills over remedy of deficits.
- Acknowledge that violence prevention requires involvement from many different disciplines.
- Use of data, data visualization, and mapping to monitor emerging health and safety issues, develop evidence-based policies, and implement ongoing evaluation of violence prevention interventions.
- Acknowledge the need to reshape narratives regarding youth and communities impacted by violence and mental health disparities.
- Enhancing infrastructures, building capacity, sustainability, implementation, and funding.
- Elevation of the youth voice and the participation of the people and organizations most affected by the policy in its development.
- Acknowledge that violence cannot be addressed without addressing race, segregation, gender, sexual orientation, disability, and poverty.
- Basis in social justice, ensuring that potential negative effects of policies should not be borne disproportionately by already oppressed populations.

2023-2024 Policy Agenda Priorities

Sustained investment in children and youth

- Support publicly funded organizations with youth programming, including schools, to require professional development training for all staff regarding how to mitigate the effects of all forms of violence and trauma on children, youth, and staff.
- Support parents and caregivers throughout the continuum of child development through culturally competent parenting education, enrichment opportunities, and formal social supports to foster caregiver well-being, resilience, and positive parenting to promote optimal child health.

Equitable access to high-quality mental health services

- Implement sustainable funding mechanisms for school-based, community-based, and faith-based mental health and substance use services and access to mental health clinics, including health promotion, standardized screening, connection to comprehensive services, and outcome tracking.
- Promote mental health care transformation (culturally responsive alternatives beyond clinical care) through youth-led, community-led, and healing-centered approaches that reflect the community's needs and priorities.



2023-2024 Policy Agenda Priorities *(continued)*

Common sense approaches to gun violence prevention

- Adopt and implement evidence-based, trauma-informed, culturally competent, and gender-responsive gun violence prevention policies that reduce access to illegal firearms and keep our communities safe.

Juvenile justice system that reflects what we know about adolescent development

- Decrease detention and incarceration, ban pre-trial detention, address disproportionate policing practices to minimize arrests, promote restorative justice practices, and reinvest savings into community-based resources and alternatives to arrests and detention with a long-term goal of eradicating youth detention and incarceration.
- Replace the use of disciplinary practices that remove children from school in Chicago Public Schools with restorative justice practices that promote racial equity and educate students and teachers about developing social and emotional learning skills to foster supportive school climates.
- Support policies in education, law enforcement, and the legal system that promote evidence-informed and community-driven interventions, reflect evidence regarding brain development, combat systemic racism, and address the impact of trauma on individuals and communities.

Sustained investment in strong communities

- Encourage sustainable, transparent, and equitable government investment in programmatic, organizational, and fiscal capacity building for community-based organizations in high-need areas most affected by systemic racism and the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on communities of color to deliver accessible, affordable, safe, and quality programs for youth and families.
- Promote economic and community development that prioritizes gainful employment, quality education, equitable access to healthcare, and affordable housing, to support historically disinvested neighborhoods to be self-sustaining, livable, and safe.