

NEIGHBORHOOD BENCHES, Inc.
Neighborhood-Schooling Teaching Practicum (NSTP)
for Mentorship Development

An expansion of the current mentoring initiative.
Our innovative way for demonstrating impact makes it easier for our students to focus on leadership roles, educational studies, and next steps.



The **NSTP for Mentorship Development** projects provide the opportunity to pull together collective experiences in urban community service and develop a unified approach to urban problems.

NSTP-DM connects urban leadership, experiential learning and credible messenger mentors to further develop young social impact leaders and transform development spaces into social innovation hubs.



Gun violence increased over the years, and the pandemic made things no better. As reported last year, shootings increased from 1054 shootings versus the 556 shootings reported last year (September 6, 2020 compared to September 6, 2019). This type of senseless gun violence led to multiple arrests increasing the number of young people involved in the criminal justice system. Neighborhood Benches understands this is nothing new to the South Bronx, and for Andrew Jackson and Melrose Houses... this is a normal lifestyle for many of our young people. The type of behaviors we witnessed are contributing factors in the decisions made among residents to support the younger adults, as well as teens in need. These same behaviors prevent elders from coming out to enjoy the weather, stop experienced adults (credible messengers) from engaging and sharing respectable knowledge that could decrease violence and incarceration among the young people. Our knowledge of this behavior allowed us to experience first-hand how these behaviors increased the fear factors for young people under the ages of 18... and in many cases become what they learn to glorify in order to avoid the "statistics" and become a "man". However, we understand the connection between the violence and incarceration. On any given day in New York City, there are approximately 700 16- and 17-year olds held in local jails if not arraigned, prosecuted and sent to juvenile detention centers.

We spent a lot of time identifying the issues that are impacting our community last reporting period. Although we plan to move forward and highlight our solutions, it is important we talk about the recent reports before reminding you of the previous issues reported.

Recent reports are discussing gun violence on a citywide level. The Mayor identified gun violence as an issue and implemented the [Mayor's Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety](#). The Mayor's Action Plan for Neighborhood Safety (MAP) is a targeted, comprehensive approach to reduce violent crime in and around public housing since 2014. MAP identified 15 public housing developments that comprise almost 20 percent of violent crime and started a pilot.

NYCHA / Public Housing Citywide Level:

— Last year 2020, MAP exerted little apparent effect on minimizing crime.

An examination by THE CITY found:

- Shootings rose at 14 of the 15 MAP sites in 2020. All told, 52 shootings took place at MAP developments, up from 22 the prior year.
- Murders increased at eight of the 15 MAP sites. Overall, killings went from five in 2019 to 16 last year.
- The number of major crimes — including rape, robbery, burglary, felony assault, grand larceny and auto theft — rose from 762 to 829, a hike of 9%, at MAP developments. By comparison, major crime declined by about 1% citywide and increased across the board at NYCHA developments by just over 2%.
- Shootings jumped by 97%, from 769 to 1,518; murders rose by 41% from 317 to 447, according to the NYPD. That marked the highest number of homicides in nearly a decade, with the deaths of a [43-year-old mother](#) shot through her bedroom window and a [1-year-old boy](#) shot at a barbecue in a Brooklyn park shaking many New Yorkers.
- NYCHA fared even worse. Shootings rose by 103%, from 155 to 314, while murders jumped by nearly 50%, from 47 to 70. Both increases exceeded the citywide percentages.

And much of that increase occurred at the city's 15 MAP sites, including the Red Hook Houses.

NYCHA / Public Housing Borough Level:

- According to the Bronx Task Force "SAFE AT HOME" report, the crime rate in New York City Housing Authority is still a problem:

1. From 2009 through the end of 2013, New York City saw a 3.3 percent increase in crime while NYCHA saw a 31 percent increase in crime.
2. Serious crimes in NYCHA developments rose about 2.4 percent from 5,088 in 2015 to 5,211 in 2016, in contrast to a citywide drop of approximately 4 percent.

During 2016 NB identified gun violence as an issue in public housing developments and started working towards systematic changes by using restorative practices and recruiting change agents to improve the community. 2017, November the Safe At Home report was released sending shock waves throughout the Bronx borough.

NYCHA /Public Housing Neighborhood Level:

1. Daily News during 2012 headlines read: ***Street crews, and how residents' fear grew at Melrose Houses and Andrew Jackson Houses.*** When the feds smashed two drug gangs in Melrose Houses and Andrew Jackson Houses last fall, residents braced for a violent fallout. Now some say their fears are coming true.

2. **DNAinfo:** February, 2016 Two NYPD officers were injured during a confrontation with a gunman who died after shooting himself in the head because he didn't want to go back to prison, police and sources said.

Three uniformed officers were on a vertical patrol inside the Melrose Houses, at 320 E. 156th St., at roughly 8 p.m. when they encountered two men in a sixth-floor stairwell, police said. One of the men, identified by police sources as 23-year-old Malik Chavis (the young man that took his own life).

3. **New York Times:** On a warm Tuesday night in the Bronx, a couple of dozen young people took refuge from their stuffy apartments in a courtyard between two redbrick towers in the Melrose Houses. They laughed, drank and smoked freshly rolled blunts as a speaker pumped out rap music. A few minutes before midnight, a gunshot cracked the air outside 305 East 153rd Street, echoing among the towers of the public housing project. People took cover under the green wooden benches in front of the building. Adrian Maldonado, who dealt drugs on a nearby corner, sprinted away from the battered front door, the police said. He made it across the street before collapsing next to a school playground.

As we review reports of gang violence and raids where young people are placed behind bars, we also acknowledge the lack of leadership, resources and mentors. There are many cases where our young people are caught up in the system and return home violently. There are cases where young people are also guilty and return violent. Knowing this we acknowledge the cycle of violence and incarceration and want to work harder to prevent this from continuing.

Here's an example of how easy it is for our young people to get identified and placed into a system where he or she is forced to adjust, adapt and survive. Recent [news reported](#) highlights of how poor decisions made by the NYPD places young black boys and girls in handcuffs... causing them to adapt to this culture of survival: "The database contains information about 18,000 people whom the department believes are affiliated with gangs based on information about their hand signs, clothing colors, music lyrics and hangout locations gleaned by officers, informants and other agencies. Nearly everyone in it is Black or Latino, and most have not been convicted of a crime, fueling criticism that the database puts young men under criminal suspicion based primarily on their race." However, NB understood the importance for identifying issues that may spin out of control and influence gun violence. Acknowledging this and not wanting to have another situation replicated as the one that took place leading to the [death of Tyshanna Murphy](#) or the arrest of Tylonn Murphy Jr., both from the General

Grant Houses in Harlem, NB implemented proactive strategies to bridge the gap between young people and adults that was supported by the local pct.

The [criminalization of social relationships in communities of color](#) have placed many of our students at risk for being rearrested and/or profiled during the pandemic. These are issues raised by Babe Howell, a co-author of the report and a professor at CUNY School of Law who studies gang policing practices. Knowing this NB had to spring into action during the pandemic to avoid a replication of previous police tactics to criminalize our students.

During these times we noticed that the areas where violent crime, youth arrests and gun violence took place seemed to be left unattended and without resources. This led to Neighborhood Benches acknowledging what was missing and designing solutions to decrease violence. However, realizing the need to reduce violence must be accompanied with healing, support and restorative practices, NB built communities of care in the process. Communities of Care is a way individuals treat one another, care for one another, and nurture one another. In order to design a community of care model, the members of NB worked collaboratively to transform how the neighborhoods they would visit, would promote mental health and self-care in everyday life. Knowing this NB designed initiatives that brought together diverse partners from across sectors and community members to plan and implement activities that address a wide range of community needs related to resilience, mental health, equity, and wellbeing. As the strategy proved to work NB continued.

One strategy that continuously proved to work is when Founder William M. Evans would remind the team of the importance of being inclusive and diversified when creating teams of leaders (acknowledged today as credible messengers). William would regularly return to the neighborhoods where he contributed harm and pilot projects, identify credible messengers and bring them into the work using shadowing tactics and uniquely designed training.

It is the intentional design of Neighborhood Benches, Inc. to enter NYCHA developments, neighborhoods, and communities that are the most difficult to engage while engaging the toughest to reach individuals around community needs and good leadership practices. Our work strengthens both at-risk youth and formerly incarcerated members of the community as credible messengers, navigating them through the system of training focused on credible messenger mentors, credible messenger supervising and program development. Part of our design for further developing our students from mentors into leaders is grounded in the stages (1,2,3). When moving onto the various stages we provide ongoing practicing opportunities like our "shadowing-style practice" and project-based learning which allows the students to put skills into practice. This intentional design highlights how the power of service, community engagement, and inspiring our youth can not only help turn the tide, but also continue to inspire credible messengers to serve their community in a positive way.

A key aim of Neighborhood Benches Initiatives are to reduce early exposure to violence and incarceration whenever possible and to utilize appropriate neighborhood interventions to mitigate the impact of the two. The solutions we offer are roadmaps for directly impacted people to practice modeled changed behaviors that build community, and tools that strengthen young people seeking to make a change in life..

We identified three areas in which we needed to focus on if we wanted to change the impact of the poor choices made by young people causing them to become victims of the criminal justice system and/or victims to violence. We promoted the importance of:

1. **COMMUNITY OF CARE/COMMUNITY-BUILDING INCUBATOR:** Planting the seed that will influence a restorative design that will connect trusting people willing to design safe spaces to live, thrive and grow.

2. **CM MENTORS:** Identifying and training individuals from the neighborhood seeking to be a change agent (e.g. neighborhood leader, mentor, credible messenger).
3. **RESTORATIVE PRACTITIONERS:** Designing a training to strengthen the students ability to articulate needs, challenges and practices to restore community values while addressing and repair harms.

We find our constituents often go from sitting on neighborhood benches to facing judgment from a court bench. Both have potentially dire consequences, from incarceration to death, and many young people do not have a full understanding of the judicial system or the street life. In our practice, NB helps to draw a line between both of these benches, and points to the impact of violence and incarceration to communities through the micro, mezzo and macro level lenses.

Neighborhood Benches Initiatives is to reduce early exposure to violence and incarceration whenever possible and to utilize appropriate neighborhood interventions to mitigate the impact of the two.

Through our Neighborhood-School Teaching Practicum for Developing Mentors, NB will facilitate the three programs through 2 cohorts. Each cohort will have the opportunity to enroll at the level that best fits their level of understanding for leadership and shifting policy. NSTP-DM is a system that unites colleges and housing developments to empower young leaders and improve public safety.

Program Description: \$30,000

Solution 1: Neighborhood Level

Need: Neighborhood Leadership Program

The Neighborhood Level solution will provide 160 students from NYCHA developments between the ages of 12-17 with a 12 week training around the work being done by Neighborhood Relation Services to end youth violence and incarceration throughout public housing property. Students will earn a stipend of up to \$187.50, organizing and advocacy training, and be connected to the #NeverBeCaged campaign. Our project-based learning opportunities will prepare students to design projects and learn the fundamentals of grant writing.

Program Description: \$50,000

Solution 2: Community Level

Need: Neighborhood Relations Services Initiative

The NRS program will challenge students to reach their full potential by learning to navigate community challenges and improving their decision making skills. Each student will learn through activities and experiences that help to develop social, ethical, emotional, physical, and cognitive competencies. Our activities include:

- Community Familiarity and Awareness Workshop
- Identity Awareness Group
- Leadership Identity Development Workshop
- Causes and Issue Impact
- LID Motivational Speakers
- Community Service Workshop
- Restorative Justice Group
- Educational Importance Group Sessions

The 6 month cohort-based initiative is offered to 100 NYCHA residents between the ages of 18-24. This initiative assists students with youth development & youth leadership by incorporating the practice of leadership roles between the NRS students and summer youth program participants. Young adults will

be prepared to meet the challenges of adolescence and adulthood while learning to design the intersections of neighborhood leadership and resident association responsibilities, as well as design collaborative actions around issues impacting the residence. This initiative will increase the presence of directly impacted people trained as neighborhood leaders in the resident association.

Program Description: \$80,000

Solution 3: Citywide Level

Need: Apprenticeship Program

Neighborhood Benches offers an opportunity for 45 individuals to join the 10 month apprenticeship program. This is a competitive application process for participants from partner organizations working within these areas:

1. Public Housing - 16 people
2. College - 7 people
3. Summer Program - 15 people
4. Courts - 7 people

The selected 45 students will be a part of a project-based learning strategy to adopt-a-project that will assist with rebuilding the community by modeling changed behaviors. Through this project we're expecting each student to acknowledge and understand the concept to never be caged. This apprenticeship group will be assigned specific key roles which will require them to shadow the team. These roles will include personal, professional and leadership development, as well as expectations to participate in focus groups, conferences, food distribution, and curricular development.

As part of our citywide approach we will use this strategy to increase our presence in a selected number of neighborhoods. This will happen by developing and supporting groups in public housing developments, as well as colleges using project-based learning, grant search, and program development. By each group using best practices and adopting a project (public housing space) and taking seriously "what works", we will increase their presence and purpose.

With the support of our Neighborhood Relations Service each apprentice will conduct 8 brainstorming sessions as a way to finalize plans for the adopt-a-project launch. The developing of tools are not limited to suggested books (e.g. Spaces, etc.) that will highlight the various ways to utilize public spaces. By the end of the program the apprentices will have the tools and knowledge to launch a project of their own focused on organizing or advocating against violence and/or incarceration through a lense of their own. These projects will launch as pilots at the selected sites.

Application Opens: January 20th.
Application deadline: February 5th.
Applicant notified of acceptance by: February 12th.
Program start date: February 22nd.
Program end date: August 27th.

This program will operate two cohorts of 40 (Harlem and the Bronx). The entire program will operate over the course of 9 months, promotion, interviews, program and student project evaluation. The program will be using Neighborhood Benches Theory of Change.

Cohort 1: The first cohort will run from February 10, 2020 to April 24, 2020 with an evaluation period ending on May 4, 2020. The 20 students will be responsible for the development, implementation and marketing of their program. Each program or project will receive a 6 month support period.

Cohort 2: The first cohort will run from May 26, 2020 to August 7, 2020 with an evaluation period ending in September, 2020 . The 20 students will be responsible for the development, implementation and marketing of their program. Each program or project will receive a 6 month support period.

The program funding is for students ages 18-24 from **Andrew Jacksons, Morrisania Air Rights, Melrose Houses** and Central Harlem working to improve community norms. Each cohort will be required to study and use the tools provided for successful transformation and project delivery.

Readings:

Neighborhood Benches Mentoring Guide

Neighborhood Benches Dialogue Guide

Transformative Mentoring (Trauma Informed-Care & Healing)

Safe Places, Active Spaces: Neighborhood Activation Guide

Suggested Readings:

Emotional Intelligence 2.0 by Travis Bradberry & Jean Greaves

Law of Attraction by Michael J. Loiser

Neighborhood Benches is a special designed organization to enter communities where people are hardest to reach. Our strategy to gather individuals with the skills to transform lives are one of a kind and one that we pride ourselves on. With the help of the Pinkerton Foundation NB will provide services to 200 young people over the course of 12 months utilizing our 10 month program and 2 cohort approach.

NB never been fully funded and our programs continue to have a huge impact on the community. As a result we are learning more and taking lessons from our challenges. We are also getting recognized by elected officials, schools, organizations and community members outside of our coverage area. We would like to continue growing with the help and support of the Pinkerton Foundation. We ask that Pinkerton Foundation fund our three programs that will cover ages 12-30, as well as the funding needed to support 1 full time staff member and 3 part time (Educator and Youth workers).

Staff:

Interim ED: \$52,000

Dir. of Education: \$35,000

Youth Coordinator: \$20,000

Youth Outreach: \$15,000

Total: \$122,000

Programs:

Solution 1: \$30,000

Solution 2: \$50,000

Solution 3: \$80,000

Total: \$160,000

Staff: \$122,000

Programs: \$160,000

Rent: \$21,600

Total: \$293,600



