

BETHEL'S 30TH ANNIVERSARY PROGRAM FACT SHEET

IN YOUR CORNER" – A MENTORING TO MANHOOD PROGRAM



BACKGROUND INFORMATION: Bethel Institute for Social Justice is a 501 (c)(3) organization that was founded in 2009. Its mission is **“to provide educational and social services to high-risk youth and families in Greater Boston in ways that measurably transform their lives and the communities in which they live.”** Though it is supported by Bethel AME Church, it is a non-sectarian organization committed to serving people of all faiths and no faith. In this 30th year of Bethel's service, we want to highlight two of the programs supported by the Institute—**Mediation & Wellness and In Your Corner Programs.**

PROGRAM PURPOSE: *In Your Corner* (IYC) is a new collaborative initiative, focused on helping men of color, ages 17 to 24 to build new life-styles after release from incarceration. In this program, young men will receive training and mentoring in five inter-connected program areas: relationship-building, academic studies, fatherhood training, health care, and employment/career planning.

THE NEEDS WE ADDRESS: Most of the youth referred to the program have been exposed to or involved in violent crimes as a perpetrator and/or victim and/or bystander, resulting in injuries, or conviction and incarceration. As a result, these youth suffer from complex post-traumatic stress disorders (PTSD). In addition, IYC estimates that 50% or more of referred youth will come from high-impact families where three or more generations of family members are system-involved with six or more public agencies. This results in youth emotionally traumatized by parental neglect of primary caregivers who are known substance abusers and/or distributors and who have repeat records of arrests and/or incarcerations. This parental neglect/absence gives rise to feelings of abandonment. Finally, because members of these families are likely to be gang-involved, dealing with bullying and threats against the family or within the family is an uphill struggle. All of these areas—PTSD, abandonment, bullying—require appropriate services and support.

PROGRAM DESIGN: *In Your Corner* (IYC) will provide a systemic approach that encompasses mental and physical health, family and/or individual counseling, education support, self-care and life-skills. IYC has formed partnerships with state, city, and community agencies which will provide the mental and physical health through community health centers, and job training through STRIVE. Mentoring will be provided in partnership with Mass. Mentoring, Mass. Community Outreach Initiative, and individual community members who have already established mentoring relationships with program participants. The program's evaluation will be conducted by Northeastern University's Public Evaluation Lab.

GOALS:

1. 24 participants involved in a 6-month intensive training period followed by 18-24 months of follow-up
2. One trained mentor for each participant
3. 50% reduction in recidivism
4. All participants leaving have a life plan that includes 5-, 10- year goals, Vision Board, and immediate next steps
5. Strong network of mentors meeting quarterly to support each other and receive additional training on best practices and trends in the field.

