



CREDIBLE MESSENGER



TAKING INITIATIVE

The Credible Messenger Initiative represents one component of the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services' (DYRS) approach to care coordination. DYRS recognizes that young people and families live in neighborhoods that are unique ecosystems, each with its own set of institutions, faith and community-based organizations, and social networks. The Credible Messenger Initiative stems from a core belief that individuals from the same communities, with the same lived experience as those they serve, are uniquely positioned to engage those young people and family members often considered the hardest to reach.

DYRS is aware that commitment with the agency represents only a brief period in a young person's life.

Families, peers, neighbors, and local neighborhood institutions represent a far greater and sustainable influence that predates, and will outlive, their time with DYRS. Therefore, DYRS acknowledges that - *whatever challenges young people are facing* - the answer is in the community.

THE ANSWER IS IN THE COMMUNITY

The Credible Messenger Initiative serves youth and families under DYRS supervision by contracting with six, neighborhood-based organizations who provide services to them, in neighborhoods most impacted by crime and incarceration. "Credible Messengers" are full-time employees of the six community based providers whom DYRS has contracted to provide intensive transformative mentoring and life coaching to DYRS youth and their parents/adult care givers. This takes the form of offering daily intensive support through evening group sessions, support circles, crisis intervention, and 24-hour responsiveness.

In addition to Credible Messengers' work with individual youth and families, they also serve as mediators and peace brokers in their own communities and throughout the District.

Credible Messengers partner with DYRS Care Coordinators to develop and execute youth-centered success plans that support and guide young people on pathways to create and meet their goals. In short, this wrap-around continuum of care through the Initiative includes but is not limited to: (a) Transformative Mentoring; (b) Parent Peer Coaching; (c) Restorative Justice Practices; (d) Economic Opportunities; and (e) Neighborhood-Based Programming.

JUSTICE REINVESTMENT

DYRS recognizes that criminal and juvenile justice investments in prisons, jails, and secure residential facilities also represent disinvestments in the communities most impacted by crime and incarceration. In recent years, the concept of "justice reinvestment" emerged as a strategy to redirect resources spent on incarceration back into communities.

Believing that the answer is in the community, DYRS practices true justice reinvestment by investing directly in growing the human resources in the neighborhoods where the majority of its young people reside.

The Credible Messenger Initiative, by creating employment for individuals who live, work, and worship in the same neighborhoods as the youth and families they serve, provides a direct investment in building the capacity of these communities.