



CITY OF SAINT PAUL
Mayor Melvin Carter

400 City Hall Annex
25 West 4th Street
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55102

Telephone: 651-266-6400
Facsimile: 651-292-7311
www.stpaul.gov/parks

Awakenings Intervention Program Background Information

The Community First Public Safety initiative calls for using new tools to address violence in Saint Paul. Awakenings is a new intervention program within Parks and Recreation, developed to reduce violence and improve health outcomes of youth participants. Trauma informed programming focuses on recovery, renewal and restoration for youth participants, their families, and the community before or after their first point of contact with the legal system. This program targets Saint Paul youth between the ages of 6 and 13 who have publicly engaged in personal and or communal destructive activities.

The Awakenings program focuses support and service to a much-overlooked demographic through a mental health lens. The potential byproduct will be an eventual decrease in the level of negative activity produced by this demographic throughout Saint Paul communities. Per the diagram developed by the Community Youth workers and based on their collective years of experience (attachment), there is an opportunity to interrupt a cycle of trauma by engaging and supporting this 6-13-year-old demographic.

Best practices in the public health approach to violence prevention call for interrupting the production pattern of both personal and intergenerational impacts of trauma. Awakenings will provide a safe place where awareness and healing can begin. The program will intervene by providing alternatives and support for participant choices. Community Youth Workers (CYW) will each facilitate a group of 6-9-year-old (**AWAKE** -Able and **W**illing to **A**ccess **K**nowledge to **E**xceed) and 10-13-year-old (**WOKE** - **W**orking **O**n **K**nowledge and self-**E**levation) targeted youth once a week.

In addition, half hour school visits or hour long one on one check in sessions by CYW's will take place three days a week. Evidence based restorative practices will be used throughout each session. Right Track employment preparation will be a component of the 10-13-year-old group sessions with introduction and preparation as a focus for the 12-13-year-old youth in each session.

Appropriate metrics will be identified as we develop a qualitative evaluation tool to measure progress.

Awakenings via COVID-19 and George Floyd:

The original version of this program was to take place inside facilities. Due to the virus, it has been adapted to an outside mobile model that includes adherence to the CDC COVID -19 health protocols. The protests that took place in response to the George Floyd incident delayed the intended June start of the program to mid-July. We also reduced the group sizes from 10 to 5 participants. We also distribute masks and hand sanitizer to the participants during the group meetings as well as practice social distancing. We look to continue to adapt the program during the school year.



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