

**CIVIC LEADERSHIP EDUCATION
A PROJECT-BASED PROGRAM FOR JUSTICE-INVOLVED YOUTH
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Founded in 2007, the Civic Leadership Foundation (CLF) prepares underserved teenagers for school, work and civic life. CLF partners with principals, teachers, and youth program directors to deliver empowering, project-based programs that teach young people critical life-long leadership skills such as collaboration, resourcefulness and accountability.

All of CLF's programs are designed to prepare youth people for the roles and responsibilities of adulthood. What differentiates CLF's approach from other social-emotional, service learning and community engagement programs is a unique Civic Leadership Education curriculum which focuses on three phases of development: personal reflection and group responsibility; entrepreneurial civic project development and implementation; and the application of the skills and experiences gained in the program to their lives. Each phase of the program provides an opportunity for youth to think, act and reflect on key skills through systematic lesson plans that encourage young people to learn and practice capabilities they will need to be successful, engaged adults.

Civic Leadership Education programs are currently in use in public and charter schools, afterschool programs and community-based social service organizations throughout Chicago and beyond. In partnership with the City of Chicago's Department of Family and Support Services and the Juvenile Intervention and Support Center (JISC), CLF has designed a Civic Leadership Education guide for use in JISC's "Reintegrating Individuals through Supportive Engagement (RISE)" program. This diversion program for youth between the ages of 15 and 17 who have been arrested for moderate to high level offenses and are deemed to be at a significant risk for continued future violence involvement aims to help youth successfully transition out of the juvenile justice system.

In addition to the program guide, CLF provides comprehensive training and ongoing implementation support to the mentors from agencies throughout the City who deliver the 18-week JISC RISE Civic Leadership Education program:

Phase 1: Build Relationships and Skills

During the first five weeks of the program, participants invest significant time building positive relationships with the cohort and their mentor as they develop a foundation of important skills that are critical to their future success—whether that means continuing their education or finding a permanent job. During this time, participants read, think about, discuss, and write about ethics not only for the sake of working together and getting along with their fellow citizens, but also to learn how leaders must listen to, persuade, and work with people of various opinions, experiences, and interests, some of which may conflict with their own.

Cohort-building establishes the foundation of trust and collaboration, the sense of self-worth, and the climate of acting for and with others that is necessary to prepare for the projects. The curriculum focuses on participants' lives in the community and in this program. As they begin to form their

cohort, participants learn to listen to each other's stories empathetically, with an eye toward formulating and solving problems. Readings and discussions provide the intellectual foundation and reflective practice they will need to think through problems ethically and critically and come up with creative solutions. Ethical cases and general social issues provide a context for evaluating and prioritizing specific community issues. As they enter into this kind of inquiry learning, participants construct a personal identity imbued with values that arise from practicing courage, compassion, humility, accountability, and resilience.

Phase 2: Develop Civic Leadership Projects

Over the next nine weeks, the youth begin the process of experiencing themselves as empowered, capable agents in their lives and the life of their community. The focus of this phase is a group Civic Leadership Project (CLP). With support provided by the mentor, youth undertake a community mapping exercise to identify a community concern, and then plan, execute and evaluate a project designed to address that concern. Numerous skills are practiced and developed - including planning, communicating, problem solving, persistence and learning from failure. Most important, this process helps to nurture a growing sense of agency among participants and to connect them constructively to their community.

In addition, Phase 2 includes an opportunity for participants to meet a civic leader, which can help them see their own potential as empowered agents within their communities. This session is important because it can help prepare participants for the reality of the work ahead including problems that need to be solved, as well as the satisfaction that comes from persevering in the face of obstacles to have an impact and make a difference. In addition, participants are continually asked to reflect on their own experiences in order to deepen their thinking about the meaning of service and about their capacities for agency.

Phase 3: Prepare for Success

In the final four weeks, participants turn their attention to their own personal transition out of the juvenile justice system. Participants spend time discussing their transitions as a group, anticipating obstacles and role-playing scenarios, as well as working on individual plans, goal setting and next steps. Weekly facilitated group discussions provide a safe space for participants to support one another as they prepare to make their transition. In addition, they continue to make connections with the skills they have learned in the first two phases, and begin to apply them to their own lives.

Assessment:

Civic Leadership Education: A Project-Based Program for Justice-Involved Youth provides a variety of opportunities for assessing participants' work and progress. The program guide includes assessment rubrics for each phase as well as pre- and post- participant self-assessments and an assessment of the Civic Leadership Project. Additionally, the program will have the benefit of outside assessment conducted by the University of Chicago Crime Lab to measure JISC RISE's impact and effectiveness. Participant progress will also be measured by MHA Labs, utilizing their Human Achievement Quotient™: Assessment for Benchmarking 21st Century.

For more information about the Civic Leadership Foundation's programs, please contact us at (773) 796-3640 or visit www.civicleadershipfoundation.org.