



Program Overview:

The Urban Life Skills Program (ULS) is an intensive, community-based mentoring program for youth ages 12 to 19 in the Little Village neighborhood of Chicago. There are two target demographics of the ULS program: gang-involved youth on probation, and at-risk youth referred through local schools and community agencies. Serving these two populations allows ULS to holistically engage both violence prevention and intervention in response to identified community needs. We seek to reduce youth contact with the justice system, promote safety, and empower young people to become community-builders and peace-makers. Our holistic program model enables us to fulfill our mission: to provide mentoring and advocacy to guide youth toward a new life and a new direction.

We envision Little Village's youth and families transformed by hope, becoming men and women of character to create a flourishing, unified neighborhood.

Stats:

In 2014, Urban Life Skills served 54 youth involved in the **justice system**. In a typical month these youth engaged in an average of 10.8 contacts (outside of required programming) per month, and 11.5 mentoring hours (outside of group programming) per month. In addition, they each attended an average of 22.5 hours of programming monthly. Over the past 2 years (2013-2014), youth involved in our program had a 32.5% recidivism rate, which is well below the national figures for similar populations. Of those who were eligible during the time period, **75% of youth successfully completed probation without reoffending**. We offered 374 program sessions to youth within the justice system for over 1000 hours of direct programming in 2014.

In 2014, we also served 54 youth through our **violence prevention programming**, a more than 50% increase in participants from the previous year. These youth averaged 7.3 contacts per month, including both mentoring and supportive programming. Based on youth survey responses, administered at intake and every 6 months thereafter, our participants showed a significant increase in the number of **caring adults** in their lives. For example, on one indicator, on the pre-test only 4% of youth reported that they could talk to more than 3 adults if they were upset or mad about something, but this number grew to 41% on the post-test. Other survey questions revealed similar results. **Future aspirations** also increased, with the most notable increase in youth attitudes toward success in work or school. Youth **attitudes toward violence** improved in almost every indicator we measured last year, with the most substantial result being that youth grew in their willingness to walk away from a fight (only 4% expressed willingness on the pre-test, while 50% expressed willingness on the post-test). In 2014, youth also showed increased ability to handle problems, based on analysis of the attitudes toward violence indicators, citing awareness of other methods to manage conflict rather than violence.