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Chicago Beyond Partners with Jails in Chicago and San Francisco in First-of-its-Kind Coalition to Address Physical and Emotional Isolation

Year-long pilot brings together urban jail administrators, frontline staff, people incarcerated, and national justice advocates to advance holistic safety

June 28, 2023 (CHICAGO, IL) – [Chicago Beyond](#) today announced the inaugural **Holistic Safety Action Alliance (HSAA)**, a first-of-its-kind, multi-state coalition that will develop strategies to reduce physical and emotional isolation for people working and confined within correctional walls. The HSAA brings together two reform leaders – the Cook County and San Francisco sheriffs’ offices – with national justice advocates to create programs that improve the wellness of staff and people incarcerated, build on holistic safety policies, and inspire other institutions toward reform.

Both institutions are forming new Internal Advisory Councils (IAC) of frontline staff and people detained to inform policy changes. The program also establishes a National Advisory Council (NAC) – composed of former frontline staff and people formerly incarcerated – to provide expert counsel to participating institutions.

“I have seen firsthand how both frontline staff and people incarcerated suffer multiple types of trauma, yet are rarely engaged in finding solutions,” **said Dr. Nneka Jones Tapia, Managing Director of Justice Initiatives at Chicago Beyond and former warden of Cook County jail.** “We are proud to work with Cook and San Francisco County jail leaders because of their demonstrated commitment to wellness for all people impacted by incarceration. [Holistic safety](#) is only achieved when the people closest to the problem - people incarcerated, staff, survivors of crime, and justice advocates - are genuinely empowered as part of the solution.”

By their very nature, jails are isolating places, for both people incarcerated and staff. Isolation takes many forms including: physical, in-cell time for people incarcerated; interpersonal isolation between jail staff and those incarcerated due to the prevalent *us vs. them* culture; and emotional isolation for both people incarcerated and frontline staff - all of which were [exacerbated](#) by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Both Cook County Sheriff Thomas J. Dart and San Francisco Sheriff Paul Miyamoto have prioritized mitigating the inherent negative impact of incarceration through significant investments in staff wellness programs and expanding family engagement opportunities for people incarcerated, among other advancements. Initiatives that have garnered national attention include Cook County [implementing trauma-informed, contact visitation](#) and San Francisco County [making all jail phone calls free](#). Both institutions will design and implement new individualized policies, practices, and procedures and pilot changes before the end of the year, showcasing their ongoing leadership and commitment to creating safer environments for all – and serving as a model for correctional systems across the nation.

“The Holistic Safety Action Alliance wants to bring about meaningful change within corrections by using a participatory approach to systems change,” **said National Advisory Council member Emile Deweaver.**

“As part of the National Advisory Council, we develop relationships with administrations to help them shape policies and practices that instill safety and healing. We hope to set an example of how justice advocates – including people incarcerated and frontline staff – can collaborate in the future to drive better outcomes.”

“Chicago Beyond will act as the connective tissue for the HSAA to build collective knowledge, provide healing resources, and support administrators as they explore making reforms to decrease physical and emotional isolation,” **said Liz Dozier, Founder and CEO of Chicago Beyond.**

“Soon after taking Office, it was evident to me that the Cook County Jail was essentially serving as a de facto mental health hospital and that improving mental health treatment would be one of our biggest challenges. I also long ago recognized the psychological harms of solitary confinement and ended the incredibly counterproductive and harmful practice,” **said Cook County Sheriff Thomas J. Dart.** “I have also ensured we’ve helped people incarcerated remain connected with their families and loved ones through multiple avenues. By joining the Holistic Safety Action Alliance, I look forward to building on these incredibly important efforts and sharing these advances with other correctional settings across the country.”

“The San Francisco Sheriff’s Office believes being separated from society should not mean being isolated from society,” **said San Francisco County Sheriff Paul Miyamoto.** “Joining the Holistic Safety Action Alliance will further our commitment to open communication, inclusivity, and safety for our staff and those in our custody. By working closely with the people most impacted, we will build on our past successes like renovating space for children visiting their incarcerated parents and building the first charter high school inside of a U.S. jail.”

The work of the HSAA is guided by a vision for holistic safety published by Chicago Beyond, called [**Do I Have the Right to Feel Safe?**](#) The publication identifies five core tenets of holistic safety and suggests strategies related to bring each tenet to life. This work was the result of a collaboration between correctional leaders, national criminal justice experts, people formerly incarcerated, and community leaders – including individuals who now serve on the National Advisory Council for HSAA, such as Vivian Nixon of the Racial Justice and Abolition Democracy (RJAD) Project at The Square One Project, Andy Potter of One Voice United, and Ronald Simpson-Bey of JustLeadershipUSA.

The inaugural HSAA will convene through February 2024, after which time participating agencies will independently continue their reform efforts.

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About Chicago Beyond:

[Chicago Beyond](#) is a philanthropic organization that works to ensure all young people and community members are free to live full lives. Because there is no single barrier to equity, Chicago Beyond engages in opportunities across philanthropy, justice, education, and beyond. Since its inception in 2016, Chicago Beyond has invested more than \$47 million in over 160 individuals and community organizations while leading national systems change efforts by designing, supporting, and building out community driven solutions. For more information, please visit chicagobeyond.org or follow us on [Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [LinkedIn](#).