

Agenda - Youth Advocacy Lab

Wednesday, June 24, 2026 - Thursday, June 25, 2026

Prevention First - Chicago Office: 640 N La Salle Dr, Suite 638

Chicago, IL 60654

Participants: ~15 Youth

Facilitation: Prevention First + Praxis Institute for Healing-Centered Youth Development

Daily Duration: ~5.5 hours

DAY 1: Lived Experience, Community Reality & Systems

Theme: What is happening in our communities—and why?

Outcome: Youth-defined understanding of safety, risk, and systems

9:30 – 10:00 AM | Welcome & Grounding (Led by PF and Praxis)

- Opening circle (names, check-in prompt: What helps you feel safe?)
- Community agreements (co-created)
- Overview of purpose (connect to real impact—policy, funding, change)

10:00 – 10:45 AM | Identity & Experience Activation

Activity: Story Circles / Pair Share

- Prompt options:
 - A time I felt safe/unsafe
 - What people misunderstand about my community
- Option: written reflection → pair → full group harvest
- Output: Initial themes around safety, stress, belonging

10:45 – 12:00 PM | Community Mapping

Activity: Asset + Harm Mapping

- Small groups map:
 - What helps (assets)
 - What harms (risks: violence, substance exposure, stressors)
 - Where these show up (physical + social spaces)
- Visual maps posted and shared
- Output: Collective map of lived community reality

12:00 – 12:30 PM | Lunch

12:30 – 1:15 PM | Systems Exploration

Facilitated discussion:

- Who makes decisions about what you just mapped?
- Introduce systems:
 - Schools
 - Funding
 - Public health
 - Policy
 - Community institutions
 - Note: Use real examples (e.g., why programs exist/don't exist)

1:15 – 2:15 PM | Root Cause Exploration

Activity: Why does this exist?

- Pick top issues from mapping
- Ask why? repeatedly (3–5 levels deep)
- Move from Individual → community → structural causes

2:15 – 2:30 PM | Break

2:30 – 3:00 PM | Reflection & Closing Circle

- Prompt:
 - What stood out today?
 - What feels important to fix?
- Preview Day 2 (solutions + voice)

Day 1 Outputs

- Youth-defined safety + risk framework
- Community maps
- Initial root causes tied to systems

DAY 2: Solutions, Voice & Advocacy

Theme: What should change—and how do we influence it?

Outcome: Youth-generated recommendations + messaging

9:30 – 9:50 AM | Reconnection & Grounding

- Light activity (movement or energizer)
- Recap of Day 1 themes (visuals posted)
- Praxis lens: Re-center energy + emotional readiness

9:50 – 10:30 AM | Priority Setting

Activity: Dot Voting / Ranking

- Youth identify top 3–5 issues to focus on
- Form small groups by interest

10:30 AM – 12:00 PM | Solution Design Labs

Small Group Work | Each group answers:

- What is the problem?
- What needs to change?
- Who needs to act?
- What would make this actually work?
- Encourage: Realistic + bold ideas; Systems-level thinking (not just programs)

12:00 – 12:30 PM | Lunch

12:30 – 1:30 PM | Message Development

Activity: What do adults need to hear?

- High level overview of communications skills (e.g., data and stories, context, conciseness, and tailoring to your audience)

Groups develop:

- Key message (1–2 sentences)
- Supporting points
- Real stories or examples

Option formats:

- Spoken word
- Letter to decision-makers
- Presentation

1:30 – 2:15 PM | Storytelling for Impact

- Practice delivering messages
- How to share experience with power

2:15 – 2:30 PM | Break

2:30 – 3:15 PM | Group Presentations

- Small group presentations
- Optional: invited stakeholders

3:15 – 3:45 PM | Closing Circle

- Reflection:
 - What do you want to see happen next?
- Acknowledgment + next steps (future engagement opportunities)

Day 2 Outputs

- Youth-generated solutions
- Priority recommendations
- Messaging for policy/funding/advocacy
- Stories and quotes for dissemination