

Youth Development: Building Connection, Safety & Hope

September brings two important observances: National Suicide Prevention Month and the start of Hispanic Heritage Month (September 15-October 15).

The numbers show real disparities in youth suicide risk, particularly among Black and Brown youth. According to the CDC's [2023 Youth Risk Behavior Survey](#), nationally, 42% of Hispanic students reported persistent sadness or hopelessness, with 18% reporting that they seriously considered suicide. Closer to home, [2025 Cook County Public Health](#) data shows that Black high school students attempted suicide at three times the rate of their peers, with Black suicide rates more than doubling between 2018 and 2023. During this time span, firearms were involved in over 40% of suicide deaths in Suburban Cook County, highlighting the need for prevention efforts that address both mental health and access to lethal means.

Youth development is prevention. Belonging, trusting relationships, culturally responsive support, and connection all build the protective environments young people need to thrive, and that work is happening right now across Illinois. The Reimagine Public Safety Act (RPSA) provides high-impact funding to communities across Chicago and Greater Illinois to prevent and mitigate gun violence, reaching many of the same neighborhoods and families reflected in the data above.

This Hispanic Heritage Month, Prevention First's [Reimagine Youth Development TTA](#) program celebrates the 2.5 million Hispanic Americans enriching Illinois, and honors the RPSA-funded organizations building safer, more connected communities across our state:

<i>Kane County</i>	◦ Boys & Girls Club of North Central IL - Elgin, Aurora ◦ Kane County Health Department - Aurora (RPSA Convener)
<i>Lake County</i>	◦ Employee Connections, Inc. - Waukegan/North Chicago cluster
<i>Winnebago County</i>	◦ Boys & Girls Club of Rockford - Rockford

<i>Berwyn-Cicero</i>	◦ Chicago Area Project - Berwyn-Cicero cluster ◦ Rincon Family Services - Berwyn-Cicero cluster (RPSA Convener)
<i>Humboldt Park</i>	◦ Puerto Rican Cultural Center - Humboldt Park ◦ YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago - Humboldt Park
<i>Little Village</i>	◦ New Life Centers - Little Village/South Lawndale (RPSA Violence Prevention Services)
<i>Pilsen</i>	◦ Pilsen Wellness Center, Inc. - Southwest Side cluster (Reimagine Youth Development)

Hispanic Heritage Month Resources

For educators and communities looking to honor Hispanic Heritage Month, the [National Museum of the American Latino](#) and the [Library of Congress](#) offer a variety of valuable resources, designed for both teaching and learning

For more information, visit www.prevention.org or email rydteam@prevention.org.