



***CeaseFire Illinois***  
**A Cure Violence Program Partner**

*Cure Violence stops the spread of violence in communities by using the methods associated with disease control – detecting and interrupting conflicts, identifying and treating the highest risk individuals, and changing social norms.*

**STATEMENT ON LAQUAN MCDONALD KILLING  
NOVEMBER 25, 2015**

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**Statement:**

Tragically, the early and easily preventable death of Laquan is all too common. Homicide is in fact the leading cause of death for young African-American and Latino men in many of our communities in Chicago. Unfortunately, these young men predominantly believe they have no voice, no hope and little trust in a criminal justice system they perceive is unfairly and disproportionately punishing them. The high risk communities we currently serve, and the dozens of others we are no longer able to serve due to funding cuts, are regularly asked to trust the existing criminal justice system. And yet, the system they are asked to trust is not perceived by them as transparent, open or fair. Part of successfully changing community norms includes developing a deeper trust in the system. And that comes through discussion, openness and transparency.

CeaseFire Illinois walks along-side many troubled and potentially violent African American and Latino young men, helping them to heal from the trauma of being born and raised in violent neighborhoods and living with continued exposure to shootings and killings on a regular basis. With mentoring, time and healing that the CeaseFire team is able to provide the youth, many are able to change behavior and start fresh.

CeaseFire, Illinois and our community partner organizations have made a huge impact in Chicago's most violent neighborhoods, and when our interrupters and outreach workers successfully detect and interrupt potentially violent conflicts we immediately establish trust on both sides of the conflict. In order for behaviors and social norms to change in the African American and Latino communities, enhanced trust in the criminal justice system must be gradually built. Police officers who work daily in Chicago's highest-violence neighborhoods are part of these communities. It's only through consistent, transparent, discussion and dialogue with law enforcement in each of these communities that such trust can be established.

CeaseFire Illinois welcomes serious partnerships and is willing to help foster these discussions, an important part of which must provide a voice for those in the highest-risk communities who hold a deep-seated mistrust of the system before change can occur. Additionally, by working closely with at risk youth, treating trauma, providing intensive mentoring, training, risk reduction, and conflict mediation services, we can help transform lives and communities.

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**About CeaseFire Illinois**

CeaseFire Illinois, a Cure Violence program partner, is a long-standing health-based violence prevention program guided by the understanding that violence is contagious and that individuals and communities successfully stop violence using epidemic control and behavior change methods. Since 2000, CeaseFire Illinois has worked with Chicago's highest-risk communities, home to many African American and Latino young men, to end violence using a public health model. And we've been effective. Multiple external, independent evaluations have shown that using the CeaseFire health-based approach in high-risk communities reduces violence between 41 and 73%, and can virtually eliminate retaliatory shootings.

CeaseFire Illinois has a history of engaging with high-risk communities, building trust and changing behavior of the very individuals who are at highest risk for violence, many of whom are African American and Latino young men. Earlier this year, funding for CeaseFire Illinois was suspended (March, 2015) in 18 Chicago high-risk communities. At this point, CeaseFire is operating with significantly reduced staff in just 5 of Chicago's highest-violence neighborhoods; the escalating violence in Chicago we've seen this year is a by-product of the removal of CeaseFire and other community-based programs, mentors and services. Despite reduced operations, CeaseFire and its partners continue working to keep Chicago's high risk neighborhoods safe in the context of this immediate additional stress.

***Assisting Violence Prevention Efforts of Law Enforcement and Community Groups***  
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