



June 24, 2020

## **West Side Behavioral Health Task Force**

We are announcing the formation of the West Side Behavioral Health Task Force during these stressful and uncertain times on the West Side of Chicago. Bringing in trauma support to the streets and homes will offer some level of relief for those dealing with trauma, stress, and depression. The Task Force will be announced at a press conference on Monday, June 29, 2020, 10 a.m. at The Loretto Hospital.

Over Father's Day weekend 2020 in Chicago, one hundred and four people were shot, 14 fatally. Forty-one people were shot, 6 of them fatally, this past Monday in Chicago. These numbers include innocent children. A 3-year-old boy shot while sitting in a vehicle with his stepfather, and a 13-year-old girl also died after being shot in the neck while watching TV in her home.

Rashad K. Saafir, Ph.D., President/CEO, Bobby E. Wright Comprehensive Behavioral Health makes this statement: "It is time that we recognize that violence in Black and Brown communities is deeply rooted in historical and cultural factors including racism and ethnocultural discrimination. These factors have produced social and environmental conditions that impair the ability of some Black and Brown people to contribute productively to the community. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), mental health is "a state of well-being in which the individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community." Clearly violence, as witnessed in the city of Chicago last weekend affects the mental health of our community. If we are going to reduce gun violence and stop the senseless killing of our children, then we must find ways to improve the mental/behavioral health of those who commit acts of violence and heal those who are traumatized by it. Rebuilding Chicago's West Side requires more than capital investments. It is imperative that we invest resources to improve the psychological and emotional wellbeing of the people who live there. The West Side Behavioral Health Task Force is established to accomplish the mission of eradicating the conditions that produce violence in our communities (i.e. racism, poor mental health and substance abuse) and improve the state of wellbeing of citizens on Chicago's West Side."

"Trauma and violence in our community should not be the norm. We must be vigilant in our efforts to achieve a new norm that lifts mental health and wellness as critical keys to our survival," said Donald Dew, CEO of Habilitative Systems, Inc. (HSI).

I am calling for immediate support from federal, state, county, and city for the work of the Task Force. There will be a call for people impacted by violence to seek counseling support for strong mental health. With the level of violence on the West Side, trauma care is mandatory for our families. Violence is a result of poverty, and must be addressed with human services and support.

Sincerely,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, sweeping initial 'L' followed by a series of connected loops and a final horizontal stroke.

La Shawn K. Ford  
State Representative-Eighth District