



***NEWS FROM THE OFFICE OF THE HUDSON COUNTY EXECUTIVE:***

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**COUNTY EXECUTIVE TO JOIN COMMISSIONER JERRY WALKER TO ANNOUNCE  
CREATION OF THE "CREDIBLE MESSENGER PROGRAM HUDSON COUNTY"  
FOCUSED ON REDUCING YOUTH INCARCERATION AND VIOLENCE**

*Joined by other concerned local officials and a national representative from CM3 (The Credible Messenger Movement) they will discuss how the Credible Messenger approach has worked in other communities and will operate here in Hudson County.*

***Jersey City, NJ***—Hudson County Executive Tom DeGise will visit the offices of Team Walker (373 Communipaw Ave., Jersey City) to join with County Commissioner Jerry Walker as the Commissioner leads a discussion about the proposed "Credible Messenger Hudson County" pilot program to reduce youth violence and incarceration at a press conference on Wednesday, August 11<sup>th</sup> at 11:30 am.

The County Board of Commissioners will vote on the proposed \$500,000 pilot program the following day, Thursday, August 12<sup>th</sup>, their next scheduled regular meeting. (The initial vote would authorize partial year funding of approximately \$292,000 through the end of 2021.)

The Credible Messenger approach connects youth who have become "justice involved" i.e., usually on probation, with adults who have been through the same experience in their youth. These adult "Credible Messengers" serve as mentors for

the justice-involved youths, providing close, structured relationships that have led to dramatic changes in the attitudes, beliefs and actions of the youth participants. Family programming also is employed to help those related to a youth involved in the justice system as part of the approach. As they build these relationships, the Credible Messengers also link the youth and their families to valuable related services and community resources.

The County Executive and Commissioner Walker will be joined other local leaders and Clinton Lacey, a national representative from CM3 (the Credible Messenger Mentoring Movement). Mr. Lacey will be retained by the County Department of Health and Human Services to assist in the implementation of the pilot program. He has successfully led similar program launches in New York and Washington, DC.

An Urban Institute Study of Arches Transformative Mentoring, the first Credible Messenger initiative Mr. Lacey launched in New York City, showed a 60% reduction in recidivism by program participants.

According to records kept by the Washington DC Division of Youth Rehabilitation Services, Credible Messengers reduced recidivism by 50 percent.

The Urban Institute study, (<https://www.urban.org/research/publication/arches-transformative-mentoring-program>) of the NYC Credible Messenger model showed significant success, including that unprecedented 60 percent reduction in recidivism by 16 -24-year-olds on probation. But the impact of CM's community capacity building effort was much greater. By partnering with Credible Messengers, the very notion of probation (or community corrections) was redefined. New voices with credible messages were now gaining access to spaces previously exclusive to parole and probation officers long closed to the community. As CM3 describes it, "Those who had been seen as the source of the pathology were now providing the healing."

The Hudson pilot of the Credible Messenger model will begin by serving 45 youth

each year. The target population is young people ages 10 to 17 residing in Hudson County who are involved in the juvenile justice system and older youth if they are involved in the juvenile justice system. Participants may come from all 12 municipalities in Hudson County. A Hudson County Family Court Judge or Probation Officer would generally refer them to the program.

Anticipated outcomes of the Credible Messenger Pilot Program include increased youth and family engagement in needed services, added community capacity to support system-involved youth, reduced recidivism and anti-social behavior and improved relationships between system stakeholders and the community.

“We are making great strides in fighting the COVID19 pandemic in our community but we need a new approach to the epidemic of violence and youth incarceration that continues to be a mortal threat to that very same community,” said Commissioner Walker. “I am hopeful Credible Messenger is the right prescription for this dire plague we have yet to cure.”

Commissioner Walker, a Jersey City native, was a basketball star at St. Anthony’s High School (Jersey City) and at Seton Hall University. After ending his professional basketball career, he returned home to Jersey City to found and lead “Team Walker” a non-profit dedicated to serving and supporting minority youth and families with a range of programs including education, nutrition and health. Since his election to the County Board of Commissioners, he has focused on issues like recidivism, youth services and more broadly the need for better communication and greater interaction between institutions and the communities they are meant to serve.

Upon learning about the Credible Messenger model through community stakeholders, the county administrators urged HHS to work with stakeholders and Commissioner Walker to bring this model to fruition in Hudson County. DHHS engaged stakeholders ranging from law enforcement to social services during the process. “Jerry believes strongly this is an approach we have to try here in Hudson

County,” said County Executive DeGise. “The evidence in other communities is encouraging. I’m glad to support this proposal and hope the Board of Commissioners will approve the resolution authorizing it on Thursday. I’m thankful to our Health and Human Services Director Darice Toon and her staff for engaging stakeholders and coordinating this effort.”

Hudson County Prosecutor Esther Suarez also supports the Credible Messenger pilot program for Hudson County. Members of her staff will play key roles in making it work. “Too often youth who enter the criminal justice system become set upon a path of repeat arrest and incarceration. Credible Messenger, which has had tremendous success in other cities, is the type of program that can have a real impact on a young person and change the trajectory of their life by connecting them with an adult mentor who has a shared experience and can provide a meaningful perspective,” said Prosecutor Suarez. “I commend County Executive DeGise and Commissioner Walker for embracing this innovative model and bringing it here to Hudson County.”

Wednesday’s press conference at Team Walker Headquarters will give reporters an opportunity to talk with the public officials and government and non-profit experts in this field about the Credible Messenger Hudson County Pilot right in the heart of one community it is expected to make a difference in, Jersey City’s Bergen-Lafayette neighborhood.

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