

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/blog/understanding-how-young-men-of-color-seek-help-after-violence>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

Last week, a [video went viral](#) of 26-year-old Ibn Ali Miller breaking up a street fight between two high school students in New Jersey.

Since then, Miller has been praised by many for his humanity and mentorship, and even recognized by Atlantic City Mayor Don Guardian. The video was a great example of young men helping each other, which is a component of successful strategies for interrupting cycles of violence. Another strategy one that is often left out of the conversation in violence prevention discourse is encouraging young men of color to *ask* for help.

According to a *TIME Health* magazine article, [nearly 70 percent of people](#) endure severe social or emotional problems after being the victim of a violent crime, but only 12 percent seek help. While violence prevention strategies often focus on interventions like conflict resolution and community engagement, few victims clearly feel empowered to ask for help, and of the few that do, even fewer are youth, people of color, male, or all of the above. The result is that young men of color, for whom [homicide is the leading cause of death](#), are not getting [the help they need to heal after traumatic events](#) stemming from gun and police violence.

Because the [aftermath of violence](#) can disrupt a person's sense of safety, lead to a range of psychological consequences, and heighten the risk of engaging in future violence, it's crucial that these young men, in the wake of violent victimization, receive both formal and informal support that can help them heal. Formal support can come from counselors, victim advocates, mental health workers, or medical professionals, while informal support can include friends, family, or other members from a person's social network. Without a basic understanding of the barriers that prevent these young people from seeking help, the victim service sector, health care providers, and other agencies providing care will be unable to meet their needs and the cycle of violence will continue.

As [Youth Violence Prevention Week](#), co-founded by the National Association of Students Against Violence Everywhere (SAVE), draws to a close, Vera's Center on Youth Justice is researching the barriers to young men seeking help after experiencing street violence, and where they go if they do end up seeking help. Researchers are partnering with six young men of color recruited from Vera's Common Justice, the Fortune Society, and John Jay College of Criminal Justice to interview and learn more about what their peers in New York City do to seek help after being victims or witnessing street violence. Our project will fill a gap in this area and allow us to learn about perceptions of needs after a traumatic event and how or if these youth use formal services, like counseling centers or victim-service units in police departments. With our community researchers, we will begin our recruitment and interview process at the end of April and aim to complete 150 interviews by November 2017. We hope that, with the information we gather from these young men, healthcare providers and crime-victim service agencies will be better able to engage and support young men of color who are survivors of criminal violence.

NEWS

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