Apr 9, 2021

Contact Kylie Mason

Phone 850-245-0150

OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL STATE OF FLORIDA

Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

New Program Launched to Help Young Victims of Crime Thrive



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody and the Florida Consortium of Urban League Affiliates today announced a new program to help young victims of crime thrive. The new public service program, Thrive, is administered through four local Urban Leagues in areas of Florida heavily affected by crime—particularly violent crime involving teens and young adults. Through Thrive, the Florida Attorney General's Office is providing federal funding for victim advocates and crime victim services for Floridians affected by criminal activity, such as assault, bullying, domestic violence and gang activity.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, "It is heart breaking any time a child is victimized by criminal behavior, especially if no one is there to help them along the road to recovery. As a former judge, I have seen young people with promising futures victimized over and over again and, in some incidences, turn to crime themselves.

"We developed Thrive to help meet the needs of these Floridians living in areas of the state with above average criminal behavior. By working with the Urban League, we hope this innovative program will better support young victims of crime through a hands-on, more-engaged approach to recovery with thoughtful guidance."

Urban League of Broward County President and CEO Dr. Germaine Smith-Baugh said, "The Florida Consortium of Urban Leagues is proud to champion this initiative with the Florida Attorney General's Office. *Thrive,* as a victim's advocacy and support statewide initiative, offers healing and systemic change within underserved communities, and the Urban League exists as

a nucleus for that change. We are committed to empowering individuals with transformative solutions to create stronger, safer, and more viable communities."

According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, perpetrators of violence tend to have a history of domestic and family violence. Children who witness intimate partner violence growing up are three times as likely as their peers to engage in violent behavior. Another study, cited in a December 2020 U.S. Department of Justice Report, found that 75% of children who witness domestic violence will grow up to repeat the same behavior. The same study found that if one person in the family chooses to use violence, within four generations, 18 people will continue the cycle.

A study in *Child Abuse & Neglect* shows that a child who experiences physical abuse, sexual abuse or household substance abuse has a much higher risk of engaging in the same specific illegal act inflicted upon the child in adolescence or adulthood, compared to any other type of offending behavior. Another study published in this journal shows that each additional adverse childhood experience, like domestic or sexual abuse, that a child goes through increases the risk of becoming a chronic, serious and violent offender by 35%.

The Florida Attorney General's Office is providing more than $830,000 in Victims of Crime Act funding to pay victim advocates and provide recovery services. Through Urban League programs, victims of crime are offered services to aid in overcoming hardships. These services include counseling, referrals to victim services programs, assistance with victim emergency needs, advocacy and more.

Although existing Urban League programs allow the consortium to interact with victims, the addition of Thrive gives Urban League affiliates in Broward, Duval, Leon and Pinellas counties the opportunity to provide vital resources and funding to victims in need—including assisting with advocacy, basic needs, relocation, security doorbell installation and more.

To help fund this new program, the Florida Attorney General's Office will identify VOCA-eligible expenses related to client services provided through the Urban Leagues and then reimburse the qualifying expenses, allowing the existing dollars to reach even more victims in need.

If you, or someone you know, are suffering from abuse or violence, please contact the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1(800) 500-1119 or call law enforcement by dialing 911.