

CFCU Members Find Value and Impact in Volunteering for Denver's Handgun Intervention Program

CFCU volunteers have been involved with this life changing and lifesaving program since its founding in 2021 and now comprise a majority of program volunteers. HIP helps youth convicted of first-time, *non-violent* firearm offenses chart a new and safer path through education/training, community support and individualized planning. Upon successful completion of HIP and probation, their record is expunged.

For questions and/or to sign up, contact publichealthstrategies@cfcu-co.org

WHEN - The 14th HIP Cohort is scheduled to start on January 12 through March 9 on Monday nights from 4:30 – 7:00 (excluding the Martin Luther King Day (Jan. 20) and Presidents' Day (Feb. 19)

WHERE – First Mennonite Church, Mennonite Church, 430 W. 9th Ave. Denver

VOLUNTEER ROLE -

As a Community Accountability Board (CAB) member, volunteers meet with youth, their family members and other community volunteers to learn together; build a trust relationship; and develop a plan for a future without guns. Here's what CFCU's current volunteers have to say about their HIP experience:

Joan Bradt - Columbine Unitarian Universalist Church (Joan has volunteered with every HIP Cohort since its founding)

I have been fortunate in my life, receiving benefits and opportunities not everyone gets. In gratitude for this, I want to help others who have not been so fortunate. While I can - and do - write checks, there is a whole other level when I work with a youth in the HIP program over a period of weeks, offering sympathy, possibly advice, and certainly support as they work to make some life changes. There is nothing like knowing you are making a positive contribution to someone else's life.

Mary Helen Coughlin, Most Precious Blood Catholic Church

Second chances can strengthen communities. The Handgun Intervention Program presents such unique opportunities for the young participants to hear about positive behavioral changes. Listening to their life stories and helping them reflect on the presentations gives volunteers a chance to guide participants and their families to a more hopeful future. In turn, this second chance program will strengthen all the communities involved.

The Rev. Deacon Jack Karn, Saint John's Episcopal Cathedral (Rev. Deacon Jack is HIP's newest volunteer)

HIP is a unique, creative, and powerful program to address gun violence among young people in the Denver area. By offering teens a real second chance, along with mentorship and support services, it embodies a more just and merciful way forward. I am honored to participate in this good work. Excited to join Cohort #14.

Bill Binet, Most Precious Blood Parish Catholic Church

The youths and families served by the HIP program volunteers need the reinforcement and encouragement we have for them. The HIP program is thoughtfully designed to enable volunteers to have a positive impact with those families.

Nancy Litwack-Strong, Temple Micah

I volunteer for two reasons. The program has been proven to be successful in terms of a very high rate of attendees staying out of the justice system after completing the program. In addition, as an unexpected benefit, it allows me to interact and learn about a segment of our population with whom I usually do not interact, both in terms of the youth and with their parents/family members.

Ruth Neil, First Plymouth Congregational Church

In a famous speech in Cape Town South Africa in 1966, Robert Kennedy reminded his audience that in a world full of huge problems, the acts and hopes of a single person can help turn the tide. That is how I feel about my participation in HIP. It is a privilege — and a responsibility—to share a bit of a life's journey with a young person who has taken a wrong turn. If something I say or do during our brief time together helps this youth choose a better path it's a blessing for us both.

Jerry Paul, Montview Presbyterian Church

HIP is a wonderful program. The young men I have worked with are polite and focused on making positive changes in their lives. Some of the gentlemen have made plans so they will not get in trouble again. Personally, I found the HIP program rewarding and highly recommend the HIP program to anyone who wants to work with youth.

Alana Smart, B'nai Havurah

I always learn so much from these youth, their family members and other community volunteers. They've all been good kids with caring and very hardworking families. They shouldn't feel the need to carry a gun—all our youth and families deserve safe communities. HIP is the one place where I feel we can have a direct impact on gun violence by supporting these youth as they chart a safer path.

Sue Tourjee, Living Light of Peace Mennonite Church

Volunteering for HIP has been very meaningful for me. I plan to continue doing so.