

# METRO UNITED WAY LAUNCHES NEW INITIATIVE:

## The H.O.P.E. United Fellowship

BY ADRIA JOHNSON, PRESIDENT & CEO, METRO UNITED WAY

Hope is on the horizon for eight young men selected for Metro United Way's latest initiative. The H.O.P.E. United Fellowship was specifically created to combat gun violence in Louisville and provide opportunities for young Black men, who are disproportionately impacted by that violence.

The fellowship is a bold and compassionate initiative designed to save lives, uplift communities, and unlock the full potential of young Black men in Louisville.



H.O.P.E. stands for Health, Opportunity, Prosperity, and Empowerment. It's a framework that will wrap these young men in care and hope through the following:

- **Health:** Access to mental and physical health care with required mental health assessments, including case management
- **Opportunity:** Required employment and skills training to help overcome barriers to gainful employment
- **Prosperity:** Stipend of \$1,000 per month for one year minimum, creating a foundation for stability and growth
- **Empowerment:** Required mentorship that helps equip young men with skills, support, and resources to make positive choices

Metro United Way worked with the Louisville Metro Police Department to identify young men at risk of falling victim to gun violence, poverty, or systemic barriers. The H.O.P.E. United Fellowship is culture- and trauma-informed intervention.

### Why target 18 to 24-year-old Black men?

This population is disproportionately at the highest risk of being impacted by gun violence in Louisville:

- Youth aged 15 to 24 account for 30% of homicide victims and 50% of perpetrators
- 71% of victims of homicide are Black men
- 22% of Black youth are either not in school or unemployed
- The cost of one life lost by homicide in Louisville is roughly \$1 million

The fellowship provides a lifeline and new choices: a salary, mental and physical health care, mentorship, educational and job training, life and employability skills, and direct access to employment opportunities.

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“The H.O.P.E. United Fellowship is more than an initiative, it’s a belief that young Black men in our community are worth investing in,” Robert E. Gunn, Jr., Metro United Way’s Chief Equity and Impact Officer, said. “With high expectations, coupled with high levels of support and mentorship, H.O.P.E. is a pathway to long-term sustainability and success.”

In the first meeting of the fellowship, the young men were asked what hope is to them. Some of their answers included: seeing a vision through to the end, having faith, and creating a stable future for their children.

They are ready to make a change in their lives, and Metro United Way is ready to support them every step of the way.

H.O.P.E. United started in March with eight initial participants. The goal is to scale the program so many more may benefit. With guidance and support, Metro United Way believes young Black men can and will rewrite their futures with stability and prosperity, reducing violence, restoring trust, renewing hope, and redefining what’s possible for the future of our community. The fellowship doesn’t just serve individuals, it helps neighborhoods heal.

If you would like to learn more or support this effort, visit [metrounitedway.org/hopeunited](http://metrounitedway.org/hopeunited).



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