

## Dr. Nneka Jones Tapia

Managing Director, Justice Initiatives



Dr. Nneka Jones Tapia is an experienced psychologist who is passionate about mental wellness, criminal justice reform, and supporting young people who have experienced trauma.

In 2018, Dr. Tapia was named Chicago Beyond's first-ever Leader in Residence, a fellowship for community leaders, focused on tackling significant challenges facing Chicago's youth. In partnership with Chicago Beyond and the communities it serves, Dr. Tapia's primary focus is on young people experiencing trauma, including those whose parents have been incarcerated. Since joining the team, Dr. Tapia has collaborated to launch *Beyond Incarceration*, a pilot program in partnership with the Cook County Sheriff's Office and the Chicago Children's Museum focused on reducing the stigma and trauma that surrounds young people impacted by parental incarceration. She led Chicago Beyond's partnership with the Cook County Sheriff's Office to reduce harms caused by correctional institutions using a framework that she developed from her experience working in correctional institutions. She also plays an integral role in Chicago Beyond's work with Chicago Public Schools to foster a more healing-centered school district.

Throughout her career, Dr. Tapia has been driven by her own life experiences and passion for increasing mental wellness for all people, especially those whose lives have been impacted by incarceration. Dr. Tapia previously served as the warden of the Cook County Department of Corrections. As the leader of the jail – an institution that has been called “the largest mental hospital in the country” with 2,000+ inmates diagnosed with mental illness on a given day – Dr. Tapia spearheaded several bold strategies to promote wellness and reduce recidivism.

One of her legacies is the Cook County Mental Health Transition Center, a program Dr. Tapia developed in 2014 in partnership with Sheriff Tom Dart that has helped hundreds of incarcerated individuals successfully re-enter their families and communities and has become a model for correctional institutions nationally.

Prior to joining Chicago Beyond, Dr. Tapia served as a Senior Fellow with the University of Chicago Institute of Politics. She earned her bachelor's degree in psychology from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, her master's in clinical psychology from East Carolina University and her doctorate of psychology from the Virginia Consortium Program in Clinical Psychology. She previously served as the First Assistant Executive Director of the Cook County Sheriff's Office and as the Chief Psychologist at Cermak Health Services.

## About Chicago Beyond

Chicago Beyond is an impact investor that backs the fight against the inequities pervasive in Chicago's communities. Since its inception, Chicago Beyond has invested more than \$35 million in ideas, individuals, and organizations that fight for all youth to achieve their fullest human potential. Because there is no single barrier to equity, Chicago Beyond invests in everything from education, to youth safety, to health and wellness, and beyond.