

NYC DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, VIBRANT EMOTIONAL HEALTH CO-HOST HEALING THE HURT CONFERENCE

*Event featured keynote address by renowned clinical psychologist, author, and television personality
Dr. Jeff Gardere*

NEW YORK – As part of National Mental Health Awareness Month, the NYC Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) and Vibrant Emotional Health co-hosted the eighth annual Healing the Hurt Conference at UJA-Federation of New York on May 19. This year’s virtual and in-person gathering, *Connecting Hope to Action*, focused on strengthening communities amid challenges with trauma, violence, and mental health.

The conference featured dynamic keynote and guest speakers, and interactive workshops on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Best Practices, Self-Care and Managing Stress, Supervisor Learning Labs, and others. Attendees had the opportunity to connect with other professionals in the field, learn new strategies, and enhance their skills.

“Since its inception in 2014, Healing the Hurt has played a vital role in responding to community violence affecting youth-serving programs, said **DYCD Commissioner Keith Howard**. “This conference has been instrumental in training professionals to understand trauma and implement trauma-informed best practices. As we gather for the eighth year, both in person and virtually, DYCD recognizes the ongoing importance of building resilience, promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion, and prioritizing self-care. Together, we are committed to strengthening our communities and ensuring a brighter future for all.”

“After three years, we are excited to have attendees back in person at Healing the Hurt Conference with DYCD. This year, we are also extending access to parts of the conference to participants via Zoom,” said **Lisa Furst, Chief Program Officer at Vibrant Emotional Health**. “This year’s theme, ‘Connecting Hope to Action,’ focuses on how we can enhance our collective impact toward healing our communities. As we emerge from the pandemic and into a new normal, we must continue to adapt to recent changes, educate our professionals, and provide new and innovative ways of dealing with trauma in our communities.”

The keynote address was delivered by Dr. Jeff Gardere, a board-certified clinical psychologist. In addition to having a private practice in Manhattan, he is an Associate Professor and Course Director of Behavioral Medicine at Touro College of Osteopathic Medicine in New York City. He is also the author of three books. In addition to being a respected academician, “Dr. Jeff” has been a contributor to the FOX Network, the *Today Show*, MSNBC, and CNN.

Dr. Jeff was the host of VH1’s *Dad Camp*, has appeared on the “Love and Hip Hop” and “Housewives” reality show franchises, and was recently a contributor and occasional substitute anchor on the nightly newscast, *Chasing News*, on WWOR-TV, New Jersey. Dr. Jeff recently starred in the documentary film, *Mental Health In Color*, and co-produced the documentaries: *You Are Not Alone: Black Gay Men and Depression*; *Erasing Family: Parental Alienation and the Effects on Children*; and *When Harlem Saved a King: The Assassination Attempt on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.*

“Trauma is something that we all experience and re-experience throughout our lifetimes. Quite often it is an invisible and constant psychological stressor that we do not discuss or even acknowledge, as it negatively impacts our lives,” said **Dr. Gardere**. “However, in the past few years, the NYC Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) and their partner, Vibrant Emotional Health, have taken the lead in working with some of the most vulnerable victims of trauma: children! But these two

organizations also understand that for their counselors, advocates, and other helping professionals to be most effective in their mission of addressing and overcoming childhood trauma, they must first recognize and work through their own trauma experiences. This will, in turn, help them develop more empathy, wisdom, and clarity in their work. They now become more than treatment specialists, but, in effect, role models, who can deliver the message to our children that with the proper help, the pain of trauma can be transformed into power! I am pleased to share my expertise, and professional and personal experiences in the treatment of trauma in the keynote.”

Healing the Hurt was launched in response to a surge in community violence impacting youth-serving programs. DYCD and Vibrant Emotional Health have since collaborated to develop training programs that build the capacity of professionals to understand trauma and its impacts, identify and manage vicarious trauma in the workplace, and transform program practices through a trauma-informed lens.

###