JUVENILE JUSTICE REFORM

A BLUEPRINT

We invite you to join us in embracing a commitment to juvenile justice reform

An overwhelming enthusiasm for previous editions of this Blueprint has led us to print a third edition. Our tenets for improving outcomes for youth have been updated and expanded, as has the resource section with a growing list of foundations and nonprofit organizations. We hope the framework assists you in finding opportunities to enhance your work to improve outcomes for justice-involved youth.

AN INVITATION

"For these are all our children. We will all profit by, or pay for, whatever they become."

James Baldwin, Author

Youth in the justice system are not so different from youth that many government agencies, nonprofit organizations, businesses and philanthropists already serve. If your organization supports youth development, education and after-school programs, foster care, workforce development, or public health, you will recognize many of the same youth who are entangled in the juvenile justice system. We invite you to become aware of these justice-involved youth and see where your organization's priorities overlap with their needs. There is tremendous potential for positive investments towards their future success.

The time is ripe. Juvenile justice systems are changing.

Federal statistics from 2011 indicate that the number of youth held under lock and key dropped 25 percent over the past decade, and by more than half in some states. Jurisdictions are using evidence-based interventions in community settings for many youth, and those youth who are confined are being better prepared to pursue educational and vocational opportunities upon their release.

The Juvenile Justice Work Group of the Youth Transition Funders Group is comprised of regional and national grantmakers working across the fields of justice, education, foster care, human services, workforce development, and public health. We support policies, programs and advocacy at the federal, state and local levels that promote fair, effective and age-appropriate treatment of youth. We help governments and nonprofits preserve public safety while improving young people's chances to become successful and productive adults.

A PROBLEM

Nationwide, police make about 2.2 million juvenile arrests each year, and 1.7 million youth are referred to juvenile courts. An additional 200,000 youth are tried in adult court. An estimated 400,000 youth cycle through juvenile detention centers. Each night in 2007 over 60,500 youth were confined in a correctional facility. [1] Each year approximately 200,000 youth under age 24 leave secure juvenile correctional facilities or state and federal prisons. [2]

Who is Incarcerated?

Poverty is the largest common denominator for incarcerated youth, exacerbated by race. Few confined teens have committed serious felony offenses, such as robbery or burglary. About 80 percent of youth taken into custody are locked up for drug offenses, misdemeanors and property crimes. Many confined youth are guilty only of status offenses, such as running away or truancy (only crimes for juveniles) and probation violations (such as missing curfew). [3] Considerable discretion built into the juvenile justice system means that youth from resource-rich neighborhoods and families are more often dealt with informally, while disadvantaged youth—disproportionately youth of color—penetrate more deeply into the justice system. [4]

Racial and Ethnic Inequity in the Juvenile Justice System

Inequitable treatment of youth of color occurs throughout the juvenile justice system. Youth of color are over-represented at many points in the system, and there is also disparate and harsher treatment of youth of color compared to white youth who are charged with similar offenses. Approximately two-thirds of incarcerated youth nationwide are youth of color. [5]

Gender and Sexual Orientation

Girls represent a growing segment of the juvenile justice population. They are disproportionately incarcerated, together with lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) youth, for status offenses such as running away, and they are held in custody longer than boys for similar behavior. [6] Gender-specific programming for justice-involved girls aims to address the realities of their lives, including frequent histories of sexual and physical abuse and teen pregnancy. LGBT youth who are incarcerated experience significantly higher rates of bullying and physical and psychological abuse. [7] For LGBT youth in the justice system, states as diverse as New York, Utah and Hawaii are adopting non-discrimination policies, practices, and training for courts and juvenile justice administrators.

Overlap between Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Youth

Both justice-involved youth and youth in foster care are often raised in families that are characterized by dysfunction, abuse and neglect. Studies have found that child abuse and neglect increase the risk of being arrested by 55 percent and increase the risk of being arrested for violent crime by 96 percent. [8] Youth need interventions that interrupt cycles of violence and victimization. Rather than harsh punishments, they need interventions that promote pro-social engagement.

School to Prison Pipeline

From 1995 to 2004, the national juvenile arrest rate for serious property and violent crimes declined 45 percent, and homicide rates plummeted 70 percent. [9] Yet in this same period, the numbers of youth adjudicated delinquent, placed in secure confinement and sentenced to probation all grew. [10] Twice as many youth were adjudicated for disorderly conduct in 2004 as in 1995. [11]

The proliferation of zero tolerance policies in our nation's schools has helped propel this dramatic increase in minor court cases. First enacted into law by state legislatures and eventually by Congress in 1994, disciplinary policies

mandating severe punishments— suspensions, expulsions and referral to law enforcement— have been expanded in many districts to cover a broad canvas of student behaviors. They include not only possession of weapons, drugs and alcohol, but also prescription and over-the-counter medications and common objects like nail clippers. Zero tolerance policies also cover such behaviors as making threats, truancy, tardiness, and vague, catch-all categories like "insubordination" and "disrespect."

Zero tolerance and other harsh disciplinary policies prematurely push struggling students out of schools and into the juvenile justice system, dramatically increasing its racial disparities. [12] A landmark study of school discipline in Texas showed that six in ten students were suspended or expelled at least once from seventh grade on, and that after their first suspension, youth were nearly three times as likely to be involved in the juvenile justice system the next year. [13] Moreover, African American students and students with education disabilities were disproportionately likely to be removed from the classroom. [14] Overwhelming evidence shows that such policies are counterproductive. After a comprehensive review, the American Psychological Association concluded that zero tolerance policies are associated with more, not less, misbehavior and lower, not higher, academic achievement. [15]

Incarceration: Less Effective, More Expensive

No experience is more predictive of future adult difficulty than confinement in a secure juvenile facility. [16] Confinement in a secure facility all but precludes healthy psychological and social development. Without enough freedom to exercise autonomy, the gradual process of maturation—learning self-direction, social perspective and responsibility—is effectively cut off. [17] Research shows longer stays in juvenile institutions do not reduce recidivism. In fact, youth with the lowest offending levels report committing more crimes after being incarcerated. [18]

Over their lifetimes, children who have been incarcerated achieve less educationally, work less and for lower wages, fail more frequently to form enduring families, experience more chronic health problems, including addiction, and suffer more imprisonment than those who have not been confined. [19] Recidivism studies show consistently that 50 to 70 percent of youth released from juvenile correctional facilities are rearrested within two to three years. [20]

This is particularly disturbing for two reasons. First, most young people age out of crime on their own, regardless of the intervention. [21] Research shows that incarcerating juveniles actually interrupts and delays the normal pattern of "aging out" because it interrupts a child's natural engagement with families, school and work. [22] Second, most youth in the juvenile justice system can be adequately supervised in community-based programs or with individualized services without compromising public safety. The vast majority of studies find that incarceration is no more effective than probation or community-based sanctions in reducing criminality. [23]

Unsafe Conditions of Confinement

America's youth corrections institutions suffer from widespread physical abuse and excessive use of force by staff; [24] an epidemic of sexual abuse; rampant overreliance on isolation and restraint; unchecked youth-on-youth violence; and frequent violence against staff. The environment breeds chaos and violence, contributing to and worsening mental health problems during periods of incarceration. One study found that for one-third of incarcerated youth diagnosed with depression, the onset of the depression occurred after they were confined. [25] While states will continue to incarcerate youth who pose serious risks to public safety, confinement of young people in locked facilities must be an option of last resort.

AN OPPORTUNITY

"...developments in psychology and brain science continue to show fundamental differences between juvenile and adult minds."

Justice Kennedy, US Supreme Court, Graham v. Florida, 2010

Throughout the country, there is movement away from punitive policies and practices, and a desire to reduce the number of incarcerated youth and preserve public funding without jeopardizing public safety. Many factors, explored below, contribute to this shifting perspective, leading us to conclude that the time is ripe to fundamentally change the juvenile justice landscape. This Blueprint presents a framework to guide these changes.

New Adolescent Brain Research

New developments in brain science highlight stark contrasts between adolescents and adults. We now know that the portions of the brain that govern impulse control, planning and thinking ahead are still developing well beyond age 18. [26] Adolescents are far less able than adults to gauge risks and consequences, handle stress, and resist peer pressure. Citing this new brain research, in 2005 the U.S. Supreme Court held the juvenile death penalty unconstitutional. Again in 2010, the Supreme Court cited brain research in holding that states may not sentence youth under 18 to life without parole in non-homicide cases. State legislatures have relied on adolescent brain development research to raise the age of juvenile court jurisdiction. Increasingly, policymakers and the public understand that because adolescent's brains have not fully developed, youth are less culpable than adults for their actions.

Scientific Evidence on What Works

There is powerful evidence on what works in responding to delinquency. Blueprints for Violence Prevention, a project of the Center for the Study and Prevention of Violence at the University of Colorado, has identified three scientifically proven model programs widely used for youth in the juvenile justice system: Multisystemic Therapy (MST), Functional Family Therapy (FFT), and Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care (MTFC).

All focus on the family. None involve incarceration. All are cost-effective, and all deliver results. [27] These models are spreading and now serve more than 400,000 youth a year. The studies provide a strong scientific base to show what works. They give policymakers an opportunity to make better choices about the efficient and effective use of increasingly scarce juvenile justice resources.

Well-Documented Models of Systemic Reform

Understanding how to change broad public systems has increased dramatically. Under the long-time leadership of Mark Steward, Missouri created a model system of small home-like rehabilitation centers for confined youth that is being replicated in Washington, D.C. as well as in localities around the country. The model has several key elements. Youth are placed close to home. They are actively involved in their treatment. Treatment is group-based. Facilities do not look anything like youth prisons. The staff are highly trained. Physical restraints are used as a last resort. Planning for reentry begins as soon as youth enter the facility.

Foundations have also launched large-scale system-reform efforts to reduce incarceration and provide better treatment for youth. The Annie E. Casey Foundation's 18-year old Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) is a model for effective reduction of reliance on detention that does not jeopardize public safety. Operating in 110 sites in 27 states and the District of Columbia, JDAI sites employ eight core strategies: stakeholder collaboration; data-driven decision making; objective tools to aid in detention admission decisions; development of community-based alternatives to detention; case processing reforms; strategies for reducing detention because of writs, warrants, and probation violations; reduction of racial and ethnic disparities; and compliance with standards to ensure safe and humane conditions in juvenile facilities.

The MacArthur Foundation's Models for Change, inspired by its groundbreaking research documenting the developmental differences between adolescents and adults, aims to advance replicable models of effective, fair, and developmentally sound juvenile justice policies and practices. With focused efforts in four states -- Illinois, Pennsylvania, Louisiana, and Washington -- as well as engagement with 12 additional partner states, Models for Change is working on issues of aftercare, community-based alternatives, evidence-based practices, juvenile indigent defense, mental health, disproportionate minority contact, and right-sizing jurisdictions.

At least 204 facilities in 27 states are implementing Performance-based Standards (PbS), a management tool developed by the Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators with support from the federal government that uses data to improve conditions of confinement. PbS tracks key indicators such as the use of restraints and isolation to provide a clear representation of what is really happening to youth and staff in locked facilities and provides administrators with tools and encouragement to improve conditions and programming.

Financial Incentives and Fiscal Realignment

Reforms that keep youth in their communities cost less and produce more value than secure confinement. Public expenditure on corrections is second only to Medicaid as the largest growing budget area of state governments. Correctional confinement costs on average $200 to $300 per youth per day, far more than even the most intensive home- and community-based treatment models, which are also better at holding youth accountable and reducing recidivism. [28] A study by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy found that every dollar spent on detention achieved only $1.98 worth of benefits (reduced crime and cost of crime). By sharp contrast, for every dollar spent, diversion and mentoring programs produced $3.36 worth of benefits. Aggression Replacement Training produced $10 worth of benefits while Multi-Systemic Therapy produced $13 worth of benefits. [29]

With states facing serious budgetary constraints, it is an opportune time for policymakers to consider ways to reduce juvenile justice spending that does not compromise public safety. Resource-realignment from locked facilities to community-based alternatives can reap better results for communities, taxpayers and children. States such as Wisconsin, Ohio, and Illinois have created innovative financial incentives to support the growth of community-based alternatives-to-placement. By redirecting the cost to incarcerate youth from states to counties, initiatives such as Reclaim Ohio and Redeploy Illinois have reduced the number of youth in state custody, improved recidivism rates, and resulted in substantial cost savings. [30]

The Role of Philanthropy in Juvenile Justice Reform

Philanthropists, government officials, business leaders, and nonprofit organizations are working together to ensure that opportunities for justice-involved youth are improved. Philanthropy can:

- facilitate convenings that enable public officials to learn, plan and make connections
- promote interagency collaboration
- fund pilot projects that determine the effectiveness of an approach
- encourage systems reform and innovation that make public services more effective and fair
- invest in research projects to learn more about issues of shared concern
- generate and vet promising policy solutions
- urge public engagement processes that increase youth, family and community participation in identifying and addressing problems
- support advocacy and communication to educate the public, key stakeholders and the media about pressing issues
- participate in networks and coalitions exploring solutions

Through the Juvenile Justice Work Group, grantmakers align efforts, share strategies and knowledge, coordinate and maximize investments, capitalize on each other's expertise, and build upon each other's work. We are finding our investments rewarded with growing success.

Youth are often locked in the state system simply because there is nowhere for them to go locally—and no easy way to pay for those services.

A BLUEPRINT

10 TENETS TO IMPROVE OUTCOMES FOR YOUTH

1. Divert Youth from the Justice System
2. Reduce Institutionalization
3. Eliminate Racial and Ethnic Disparity
4. Ensure Access to Quality Counsel
5. Create a Range of Effective Community-Based Programs
6. Recognize and Serve Youth With Specialized Needs
7. Build Small Rehabilitative Facilities
8. Improve Aftercare and Reentry
9. Engage Youth, Family and Community
10. Keep Youth Out of Adult Courts, Jails and Prisons

1. Divert Youth from the Justice System

Youth are often better served if involvement in the justice system can be avoided. Most youth age out of delinquent behavior without any formal justice-system intervention. [31] Unnecessarily exposing young people to the juvenile justice system can actually encourage future criminal activity rather than deter it. [32] For many youth entering the justice system, the consequences of a single lapse in judgment can haunt them for a lifetime.

One diversion strategy provides law enforcement with alternatives to arrest, such as Crisis Intervention Teams, an innovative police-based first responder program of pre-arrest diversion for those in a mental illness crisis. Civil citation programs, supported by the Eckerd Family Foundation and adopted in counties throughout Florida, give youth who are stopped by police for minor offenses the option of performing community service and receiving counseling instead of being charged with a crime. Pre-arrest diversions have been proven to be cost effective as well as beneficial for youth. In Florida, civil citation programs have saved the state more than $50 million in five years. [33]

Another strategy is to develop post-arrest alternatives that divert youth from court involvement. In New York City, with consent of the victim, the Department of Probation has statutory authority to divert young people who have been arrested before their cases are sent for prosecution. The Annie E. Casey Foundation supported the creation of the Juvenile Reception Center in Portland, Oregon, where, in lieu of formal court intervention, the police, the county juvenile justice system, and a nonprofit organization collaborate to provide social service referrals for about 2,000 youth a year who are picked up by the police for non-violent acts such as shoplifting.

2. Reduce Institutionalization

Institutionalizing young people must be the choice of last resort, reserved only for those who pose such a serious threat that no other solution would protect public safety. Incarcerating youth disrupts their positive social development and exposes them to negative behaviors. Youth should never be placed in a facility solely because of their family situation or social service needs.

The overwhelming majority of justice-involved youth can be served, and the public kept safe, by community-based services that align with best practices in the field. [34] Jurisdictions can distinguish between youth who pose risks to public safety and those who can be placed in less-restrictive settings by using validated risk and needs assessments that measure risk to public safety and guide placement decisions; expedited case processing; and sentencing guidelines.

Texas, North Carolina and Virginia have adopted legislation to keep youth convicted of misdemeanors out of state custody and have reduced commitment rates substantially: 36 percent in Texas from '07 to '10; 61 percent in North Carolina from '98 to '08, and 50 percent in Virginia from '99 to '09. [35] Starting in 2000, Wayne County (Detroit), Michigan launched a groundbreaking juvenile care management network. Management of adjudicated youth was shifted to the county from the state and funds saved from reductions in incarceration were invested in local programs. As a result, Wayne County's use of short-term detention has been cut in half; the average daily population of youth in training schools declined from 731 in '98 to two in '10; and the recidivism rate two years following court termination was only 18 percent. System costs dropped from $113 million in '99 to $88 million by '10. [37]

3. Eliminate Racial and Ethnic Disparity

In nearly every state, in every juvenile offense category—person, property, drug, and public order—youth of color receive harsher sentences [38] and fewer services than white youth who have committed the same category of offenses. [39] Confidential youth surveys show that during adolescence, youth of all races and ethnicities become involved in violence, property crimes and other delinquent behaviors with only modest differences in the frequency and severity of their lawbreaking. [40] Yet African-American youth are arrested at dramatically higher rates than white youth for all types of crime. Once arrested, they are more likely to be detained, formally charged in juvenile court, placed in a locked correctional facility, waived to adult court, and incarcerated in an adult facility. [41]

Jurisdictions can significantly reduce racial and ethnic disparities in their juvenile justice systems. They can use data to detect disparate treatment. They can eliminate subjectivity from decision-making with objective screening instruments. Jurisdictions can develop culturally competent programming, create a system of non-secure graduated sanctions for youth , and employ mechanisms to divert youth of color from secure confinement. [42]

The W. Haywood Burns Institute and the Center for Children's Law and Policy are working with state and local jurisdictions to eliminate racial and ethnic disparity in the juvenile justice system. With support from many foundations, including Annie E. Casey, MacArthur, Ford and Open Society, these organizations use data-driven, consensus-based approaches to assist a broad range of stakeholders, including judges, prosecutors, public defenders, and police, reduce racial imbalance and ensure that juvenile justice systems are fair and equitable. Santa Cruz County, CA cut the average number of Latino youth in detention in half. Baltimore County, MD, Rock County, WI, and Union County, NC all reduced the percentage of youth of color in secure detention from between 32 and 50 percent.

4. Ensure Access to Quality Counsel

Effective assistance of counsel is essential to reducing unnecessary detention, transfer to adult court, and incarceration of young people. [43] Youth in delinquency cases have a constitutional right to counsel, as the U.S. Supreme Court made clear in the 1967 landmark case, In re Gault. Yet across the country, youth too often face court hearings without the assistance of competent counsel, sometimes appointed as little as five minutes before a case is called, and many waive their right to counsel altogether. Like all people, youth need access to qualified, well-resourced defense counsel throughout the entire juvenile or criminal court process.

Beneficial reforms include early assignment of counsel; policies that ensure that all youth are represented; specialized training for attorneys on topics such as adolescent development, mental health and special education; and cross-system representation when adolescents are involved in multiple systems such as special education and child welfare. [44] An informed defense attorney can also ensure that youth are not subject to unwarranted collateral consequences of juvenile justice-involvement that can affect education, employment and residence.

The Juvenile Indigent Defense Action Network (JIDAN), coordinated by the National Juvenile Defender Center, is a MacArthur Foundation Models for Change-supported effort launched in 2008 to implement targeted strategies to improve juvenile indigent defense policy and practice nationwide. A JIDAN member, Massachusetts created a Juvenile Advocacy Department (JAD) in its statewide indigent defender agency, with nine juvenile defender officers and enhanced capacity to provide leadership, training, support, and oversight to nearly 600 private attorneys in best practices in juvenile defense. Since JAD opened, attorneys representing youth in Massachusetts have seen a significant increase in training opportunities and requirements and a dramatic increase in oversight. Motions practice on behalf of youth in court has also significantly increased.

5. Create A Range of Effective Community-Based Program

Community-based programs positively change the trajectories of young people's lives. Jurisdictions are building continuums of alternative-to-placement programs with graduated levels of supervision and services to ensure that youth are placed in programs that help them desist from delinquency and progress personally. Having a variety of community programming available for youth provides options for decision-makers and therefore options for youth.

Community-based alternative-to-placement programs range from probation to wraparound services with intensive supervision. They can include home confinement, alternative education, family preservation, mentoring, victim-offender mediation, restitution, community service, respite care, and day and evening reporting centers with educational, recreational and counseling opportunities. Programs can stand alone or be housed in existing organizations serving a broad range of youth. Evidence-based programs such as Multi-Systemic Therapy, Functional Family Therapy, and Multi-Dimensional Treatment Foster Care (MST, FFT and MTFC) serve those with the highest risk of offending.

Foundations can encourage jurisdictions to adopt evidence-based and evidence-informed programming as well as broaden the evidence-based field by supporting evaluations of new, innovative programs. The Edna McConnell Clark Foundation has invested more than $21 million in Youth Villages, a nonprofit organization that runs evidence-based programs for justice-involved youth, including MST, in several states. Expanding on this idea, the Annie E. Casey and Robin Hood foundations supported the design and implementation of the "Blue Sky Project" in New York City to integrate MST, FFT and MTFC into a single continuum of care for young people who would otherwise be sentenced to placement. In Blue Sky's second year of operation, 62 percent of participants were arrest-free within one year from the start of services, representing a reduction in all categories of arrests, and significant declines in felonies and violent felonies in some boroughs.

6. Recognize and Serve Youth with Specialized Needs

The juvenile justice system is too often used as a dumping ground for youth with mental health needs. Research shows that 70 percent of youth involved with the juvenile justice system meet the criteria for at least one mental health or substance abuse disorder. [45] Juvenile justice systems regularly act as weigh stations where youth are confined solely due to a lack of community mental health treatment. [46] These juvenile justice facilities are often overcrowded and understaffed and youth are exposed to stress, trauma and serious harms. Youth who have behavioral and mental health needs are particularly vulnerable to these harms, which result in serious injuries, self-mutilation, suicides and death. [47]

Juvenile justice involvement is only appropriate when a youth's delinquency—not his or her needs or disabilities—is the primary reason for confinement. Vulnerable youth can be identified through comprehensive screening and assessments in order to provide appropriate treatment, supports and services. Mechanisms to divert youth such as juvenile mental health courts, wraparound services and referrals to community-based programs are all gaining recognition as strategies for getting justice-involved youth into mental health services, which are less expensive and more effective settings for meeting their needs.

Launched in 2005, The California Endowment's $6.5 million Healthy Returns Initiative (HRI) worked with five county probation departments to improve access to health and mental health services for youth in detention facilities. The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJ) is helping policy-makers assist teenagers caught in a cycle of drugs, alcohol and crime through a five-year, $21 million Reclaiming Futures initiative encompassing ten pilot sites across the nation. Recent evaluations of both of these initiatives demonstrated success in inspiring important changes in juvenile justice systems: counties were able to more systematically identify youth with health and mental health needs and connect them to appropriate care and resources in the community. In addition, HRI counties reported reductions of self-harm behaviors inside juvenile hall and fewer days in custody for participating youth, which resulted in probation cost savings.

7. Build Small Rehabilitative Facilities

Juvenile correctional institutions do not live up to their name. Placing youth in large, group confinement facilities is not justified from the perspective of treatment effectiveness or the prevention of future recidivism. [48] For youth who pose serious risks to public safety, several jurisdictions are phasing out large, prison-like institutions and building small, home-like secure facilities in their place. Small rehabilitation centers give young people the care and interaction they need.

The best facilities are run by youth specialists who are highly motivated and well trained, most with a college degree. The culture and the physical environment are conducive to positive youth development [49] and rehabilitation. These facilities are located close to the communities where young people live, allowing families to repair and renew relationships and practice skills for addressing challenges youth face upon release. Staff members provide developmentally appropriate individual and group programming with the goal of enabling youth to reintegrate into their communities. Lengths of stay are determined by achievement of treatment goals and youth are released when treatment goals are met.

Missouri created the first such model, which has proven extremely successful. Its rehabilitative approach has been shown to better protect public safety and produce more impressive outcomes than large institutions or other punitive alternatives. Not only do youth released from the Missouri system have lower rates of further juvenile and criminal justice involvement (70 percent of Missouri youth avoided recommitment to any correctional setting three years after discharge, as compared to a 45 to 75 percent re-arrest rate nationally), they also show improved educational outcomes and family functioning. [50] With support from the Annie E. Casey and Open Society foundations, and Atlantic Philanthropies, the Missouri Youth Services Institute is working with jurisdictions across the country to implement the "Missouri model."

8. Improve Aftercare and Reentry

The best reentry programs begin while a youth is still confined. Nearly 100,000 youth are released from juvenile justice institutions each year. Most are returned to families struggling with poverty in blighted neighborhoods with high crime rates, few programs, and poorly performing schools. Key to success is connecting youth to people, programs and services that reinforce their rehabilitation and help them become successful and productive adults.

Successful aftercare and reentry programs require coordination between multiple government agencies and nonprofit providers, not only to develop new services, but to help youth better access existing services. Upon release, teenagers must enroll immediately in school or have a job waiting. Otherwise, they are more likely to return to their old friends and delinquent behaviors. Workforce development—helping teens attain job skills and earn money—is a key motivator for adolescents, increasing their commitment to and enthusiasm for learning. Youth must have quick access to mental health and substance abuse services as needed. And they must receive strong support from family and other caring adults. [51]

With support from the MacArthur and Stoneleigh foundations, the Pennsylvania Academic and Career/Technical Training Alliance (PACTT) improves the academic, career and technical training that youth in placement receive to help them transition successfully back to their home communities. PACTT works with residential facilities to align academic programs with Department of Education standards and offers entry-level industry-recognized certifications portable after discharge. PACTT has stimulated rapid expansion of career training programs and currently has more than 60 offerings, including culinary arts, maintenance, auto body, welding, and office support. Today, close to a quarter of youth discharge with either a high school diploma or GED and about half of the youth leave placement with an employability portfolio and soft skills competencies.

9. Engage Youth, Family and Community

An overwhelming body of research shows that parents and families are crucial to successful youth development. Unfortunately, most juvenile justice systems are more inclined to ignore, alienate or blame family members than engage them as partners. [52]

Involved adults are necessary to keep young people active in their own rehabilitation. Using techniques such as family conferencing, jurisdictions are learning to work with parents—not against them—for the benefit of youth. Counties are soliciting consumer feedback from youth in their care, thereby improving the quality of their programs and also building competencies in young people. Participatory justice initiatives aim to engage a broad swath of community members in a youth's rehabilitation. Young people and their parents around the country are successfully advocating for reform.

The Family Justice Program of the Vera Institute of Justice provides training and technical assistance to help community-based organizations and justice agencies adapt case management styles that are strength-based and family-focused. The Campaign for Youth Justice National Parent Caucus is a group of families with justice-involved youth that are advocating in communities, states and at the national level to demand a more just and effective justice system. Common Justice, a demonstration project of the Vera Institute, funded by the Langeloth, Blue Ridge, and Stoneleigh foundations, offers an alternative to the adversarial court system that uses voluntary participatory dialogues among harmed (victim) and responsible (offender) parties and their families, friends and neighbors. This model promotes healing and accountability while facilitating the recovery of individuals and communities. Participatory justice (often called restorative justice) has been shown to reduce recidivism, [53] significantly reduce post-traumatic stress in victims, [54] and leave both harmed and responsible parties more satisfied with outcomes. [55]

10. Keep Youth Out of Adult Courts, Jails and Prisons

Currently an estimated 200,000 youth are tried, sentenced or incarcerated as adults every year across the United States. [56] During the 1990s—the era when many of our most punitive criminal justice policies were developed—49 states altered their laws to increase the number of minors being tried as adults. On any given day, 10,000 youth are detained or incarcerated in adult jails and prisons. Studies show that youth held in adult facilities are 36 times more likely to commit suicide and are at the greatest risk of sexual victimization. [57] Youth of color are over-represented in the ranks of juveniles being referred to adult court. In 2008, the U.S. Department of Justice and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention found that transferring youth to the adult criminal justice system does not protect the community and substantially increases the likelihood that youth will re-offend. [58]

Multi-faceted campaigns have proven successful in changing these laws and policies within states. Campaign organizers establish goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and targeted. Youth and parents are involved. Dedicated resources are important. Campaigns include organizing and base-building; coalition building; direct action; external communication and outreach; policy research; strategy; and evaluation and documentation. Celebrating small successes maintains dedication to the effort.

The Campaign for Youth Justice is dedicated to ending the practice of prosecuting, sentencing and incarcerating youth under the age of 18 in the adult criminal justice system. Since 2005, with support from the Open Society, Public Welfare, MacArthur, Annie E. Casey, Ford, Eckerd Family and Tow foundations, the Chasdrew Fund, and Atlantic Philanthropies, the Campaign and its allies have affected policy changes in more than a dozen states. With assistance from the Campaign, in 2007 the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance secured the passage of a law that raised the age of juvenile court jurisdiction from 16 to 18.

> "Working together, with righteousness and hope, we can create a country that is about reverence and reconciliation, not a world of shackles and concrete cells."
>
> *Lateefah Simon, Advocate*

A SOLUTION

Philanthropists working across fields of justice, education, foster care, human services, workforce development, public health, racial justice, and human rights are making strategic investments through small, moderate and large grants. Philanthropy is supporting research and advocacy, funding innovative programs, convening government, business and community stakeholders and supporting education and training for government and nonprofit leaders. Philanthropic support for federal and state-based advocacy and public education campaigns in particular over the past decade has led to dramatic improvements in the lives of justice-involved youth. But there is much more to do.

Through the YTFG Juvenile Justice Work Group (JJWG), grantmakers in all fields affecting disconnected youth can support policies, programs, and advocacy at the federal, state and local levels that promote fair, effective and age-appropriate treatment of youth. Philanthropy can help governments and nonprofits preserve public safety while improving young people's chances to become successful and productive adults.

We hope to entice philanthropists, policymakers, advocates and service providers, particularly those already serving disadvantaged youth, to seize this opportunity to advance juvenile justice reform. After all, these are all of our children; let us profit from what they become.

If you are interested in finding out more about the Youth Transition Funders Group Juvenile Justice Work Group, becoming a member, or sharing resources, please reach out to us through the JJWG Coordinator, Julie Peterson at: jempeterson@verizon.net, or the YTFG Director, Lisa McGill at: lmcgill@ytfg.org

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The following is a partial list of nonprofit organizations to which YTFG members turn regularly for information, advice and assistance.

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Campaign for the Fair Sentencing of Youth
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Endnotes

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Today in America, three million young adults, ages 14 to 24, are neither in school nor employed.

The Youth Transition Funders Group is a network of grantmakers whose mission is to help all youth make a successful transition to adulthood by age 25. Most young people make a safe passage from adolescence to adulthood with the support of their families, caring adults, communities, and schools. However, youth with few supports – such as teens aging out of the foster care system, youth who do not finish high school, or youth in the juvenile justice system – need help to find the right path to success. YTFG is dedicated to improving the lives of the three million young people, between the ages of 14 and 24, in need of extra support.

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