

OJJDP FY 2022 Regional Listening Session: Northeast Region

August 1, 2022 | 2-4 p.m. ET

Breakout Room 1: Treating Children as Children

- 1. What Does Treating Children as Children Mean to You?
 - a. What do you think are best practices for treating children as children?
 - Those who are older siblings have a ton of responsibilities already. One example that we see a
 lot are when kids are handling adult responsibilities, such as translating documents for their
 parents. Our program really encourages kids to be kids when they enter our facilitates and we
 give them the opportunity to laugh, learn, and play, and develop their own interests as kids.
 - We need to remind folks that kids are just trying to find their way. They are going to act out; that is a normal part of adolescence. However, adults are so reactive to this and react in a negative way. For those working with young people, we need them to have a working understanding of trauma and what trauma looks like. We look at trauma as an academic concept, and we do not look at it through the lens of a young person. We need to learn how to treat trauma instead of punishing kids.
 - There needs to be more alternatives to punishment. We need to build up diversion programs and spread the word on best practices when it comes to these alternatives. Even though these are discussed often, there is still a long way to go in terms of legislation.
 - We need to recognize developmental norms and apply them. We must meet kids where they are. Our treatment programs need to be developmentally appropriate.
 - We need to recognize that young people are not responsible for absolutely everything that an adult should be doing. We need to have the appropriate caregivers in place to help assist young people to drive the best outcomes of success.
 - We are very comfortable when it comes to young children and nonviolent offenses. The real
 challenge for our field is regarding children who commit violent acts. How we continue to treat
 those children as children is the challenge. We need to address the capacity of growth. We talk
 about certain types of children that we are comfortable working with, and that is inadequate
 because you are not meeting the needs of all children involved. We have to hold the principle all
 the way through and think about what it means for our work, and the tradeoffs and concessions
 when we think about investments and reform.
- 2. The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDPA) establishes four core requirements: (1) the deinstitutionalization of status offenders; (2) separation of youth from adults in secure facilities; (3) removal of youth from adult jails and lockups; and (4) reducing racial and ethnic disparities.
 - a. What goals do you recommend OJJDP set for the jail removal requirement (which states must follow if they want to participate in the Title II Formula Grants Program)? (For example, zero youth in adult jails.)
 - i. How can we get to that goal collectively?
 - ii. What are states doing to get there and how can OJJDP advance that goal?



- Data-transparency is a big part of the ethnic disparities. When a locality likes to think they are
 more progressive than they are, then we need to look at the data to tell us what the truth is.
 Data is important and it is tied in with racial justice issues. In order to address a whole problem,
 you really need data to illuminate it.
- In terms of racial disparities, a lot of it comes down to policing. One question for the group is, How can we be drilling down and moving away from the institution as the priority for reform? We need to think about the systems that are operating it. If we are continuing to allow children to wind up with permanent adult convictions, then you will see a trend of them continuing to get pushed out in society.
- On the policing part, we need to limit police contact when it is not necessary. [State] has been
 pushing hard on police departments and policing in schools. Research shows that their presence
 does not actually make schools safer. The data shows that kids are getting arrested for low level
 things. There are kids who are not troublemakers who are also getting patted down by police,
 and that drives this negative mentality and attitude.
- Reentry is not just an adult system thing. If we help kids when they are returning to their community, that goes a long way to ensure they do not become adults who reoffend in the future.
- There is a generational impact of kids who are dealing with substance abuse disorder from their parents. There is also generational poverty that kids deal with.
- There is this idea that we always hear of kids needing to be resilient, but we need to dive in and ask ourselves why kids need to be resilient in the first place. What trauma have they been facing? What are they dealing with at home and in schools?
- There are many people who work with kids who are overworked and organizations that are understaffed. These are the types of people who you do not want to work with kids because it can cause more harm than good. We need to adequately equip these professions to ensure they are successful.
- In schools, there is insurmountable evidence that police in schools do not have good outcomes. Instead of paying for more police in school, we need to funnel our dollars to clinicians and therapists as that is what the data is saying is the most beneficial.

3. If you had a magic wand, and no barriers existed, what would you say OJJDP's goal for treating children as children should be?

- Diversion programs are effective. If we had all the money in the world, this would be absolutely amazing.
- Directing funds towards diversion and really establishing the best practices for diversion. I feel
 like we have been pushing against it for so long, but the idea of putting kids in the system to get
 them some help is wrong. Kids need to get help outside of the system. They need to stay in their
 communities, when it is possible. For low-level offenses, we need to build capacity and
 restorative justices for them as well. We need to get away from this idea that we have to put
 kids in the system all the time.
- Yes, we need diversion programs but not law enforcement diversion programs. Our organization focuses on youth groups, for example, and this has played a big role in keeping kids out of the system. The funding for community-based organizations is critical here and people need to understand the impact of this if we want to initiate change.
- Train-the-trainer type trainings would benefit organizations greatly.



- I really like this focus of meeting kids where they are and meeting their needs without them having to touch the system at all. I think having one trusted adult who can help throughout the entire journey is crucial here.
- Parents and families are often navigating sets of risk of surveillance and state control, so I would love to see ways to serve young people and their parents who are at risk.
- Mental health services is the magic wand. That is what is needed.
- We need much better mental health supports identified as a community safety and youth crime solution. The whole continuum from well-being and self-care, all the way through crisis response and psychiatric beds. The gaps in these systems drive a lot of juvenile and criminal legal system contacts for adolescents and make those contacts much more deep-end (incarceration) or more prolonged.
- More resources to create access for young people is a huge need.
- 4. What can OJJDP do to advance this key priority through the kinds of strategies and activities it undertakes? (For example, communications, webinars and training, publications, policy guidelines, and pilot programs.)
 - a. What policies, guidance, or communication would be helpful for OJJDP to develop to support the priority of treating children as children?
 - Emotional learning is important. You understand by building relationships with youth. Ask yourself what is a youth's spark; what motivates them? It's great to also to think outside of the box as not every kid fits in every cookie-cutter mold that we try to put them in. Developing these sparks to lifelong passions is the key. It would be great to see OJJDP focus on programs that expose children to different hobbies to develop their own unique passions.
 - There are many grassroot programs that are working. I want to start shouting from the mountain tops about the best practices that are working, and then disseminate that information to the people in the field. The blaring headlines that we see are what we are doing wrong; it does not highlight what we are getting right. If there is a way to get all of the restorative programs that are working and talking about them in social media/media, it heavily influences legislation.
 - Having toolkits housed in one obvious place to help people stay on track since there is a high turnover rate in this field would be beneficial. That way, people always have an example to point to.
 - Webinars from those who are working directly with youth and can share about their own successes would be great and could benefit everyone.
 - b. What ideas do you have for pilot programs OJJDP could implement that align with this priority?
 - Policy guidelines coming from OJJDP that really affirm the importance of diversion programs, expungement efforts, etc., would be another tool in our toolkit. Organizations are experiencing a lot of pushback from those who are wanting more regressive policies. OJJDP is a key driver here, and we cannot lose sight of that influence.
 - A program that allows youth to skip long waiting periods to access mental health services if it
 was determined that they needed the service immediately. We need more clinicians and
 therapists in place otherwise this will just be a vicious cycle. We need access to better mental
 health services.



- Making investments in mental health is our community safety solution. It doesn't have to be through the juvenile justice system; it needs to be something that is just provided upfront, regardless of whether kids come into contact with the system in general.
- There need to be services in place in the education system and then ensure that kids have the same opportunities in the education system, too.
- Keeping kids out of detention, even if it is a serious offense, and redirecting them to get services within their community, is a trend I would like to keep seeing.

Breakout Room 2: Serving Young People at Home, in Their Communities, With Their Families

1. What does it mean to you to serve young people at home, in their communities, with their families?

- A huge part of it for OJJDP is that we cannot forget as we work with these children that they are part of a family. We can't continue to separate that. Years ago, OJJDP had a little bit more focus around funding states and nonprofits in an inclusion of a family strategy. I remember when there was a focus on that years ago, and it seems in some ways, we've lost that focus. And so, I think that we can't separate the kids from the families and attempt to treat the kids separately and then expect some level of positive whatever it may be to come out of that. I think we have to look at all of it as one unit. When we do that, the idea of treating kids at home in their community—which is very much a system of care philosophy—it makes the most sense, right. There is a level of comfort because there is a level of knowing and ideology, because I am very clear of where I am at because this is the community that I am attached to. But knowing that I have committed an offense and while I have to go away, instead of that, I can stay in my community, and I can see the positive interventions that are applied to my family to be a safe and holistic human being that contributes to society. But I have to have a vested interest in it. There has to be a space in there somewhere where I fit. And for the parents, too. There has to be a place where they fit and add value and are seen beyond being a "client." I have to play an active role in the development and delivery of services provided to me. I must be involved in crafting my solutions, so to speak. "Solution" is not the best word. But I need to be able to be involved in whatever intervention that is going to be offered to me. I want to be one of those people around that table. I want us all involved in determining what is the intervention or resource that best supports me and my family. I want my parents and caregivers involved in that as well. We always attach the parent and the caregiver to the child's individual crime. When kids are incarcerated, parents also do the time. In some way, it impacts us all. We need to be much more thoughtful about that when crafting interventions. We all need to take a strong and active role in the development and delivery of services. We need to be involved in those conversations.
- Yes. It's not a one size fits all, and there is not one magical solution.
- I would echo lot of that. You want them to be more than just the client; you want them to be active participants and have agency around making decisions around their lives. That means it does have to include the family. And not just biological family—their chosen family: Who they listen to, who takes care of them, who they feel safe with, who they see their future with. We are always advocating for young people in secure settings to be able to talk to who they want to



talk to. I understand there need to be parameters around that. But if you want them to succeed, they have to feel invested. It's these themes of integration and individualization and more of a holistic approach. Sometimes, programs are too clunky, and systems are too restrictive, so we need to get more creative about those concepts and how to integrate them into the work is something—to the extent that OJJDP can support that—whether developing them or identifying ways that are working, so other jurisdictions can model those practices would be helpful.

- For Tribal youth, the cultural piece is incredibly important and is not something that they are necessarily getting if they are in a detention facility.
- That is such a difficult piece. When it comes to cultural implications and when it comes to Tribal youth, we as a society need to do a better job.
- a. What do you think are best practices for serving young people at home, in their communities, with their families? Do you have specific examples of implementing community-based alternatives and involving families in the treatment of youth?
- Youth advocate programs function in both juvenile justice and child welfare—they like to refer to it as "wraparound on steroids" because it has an extra support component. It's where advocates can respond in real time to young people's needs. That's challenging in a rural setting. Sustaining that kind of service level in a rural setting—and you want advocates from those areas—it starts to get a little tricky administration-wise, and you have to get kind of creative. You have to provide that individual support but also identify other programmatic support and resources and work with the young person in an integrated fashion. Credible messenger mentoring model is another best practice. If OJJDP can emphasize that it's not just the things that you do, it's how you do it that matters. It's how you empower the community and put resources there who are better able to partner with families. Those are the practices we are trying to get at that get at that bucket of "how you keep a youth a home." The challenge is not always so much in the resourcing and structure, but in the mental model of the agencies you are partnering with. To see these kids differently. It's not necessarily a program, it is an approach. And the fundamental tenets of the national support help lend some creativity, especially if you are in a rural community. It may not necessarily be an evidence-based best practice. That is a little bit of a barrier. We have to recognize more of that if we are going to get at strengthening the communities we want these young people to be thriving in as opposed to residential or secure care.
- There are smaller communities that are finding ways to serve youth and their families in community-based programs. It may not always look like evidence-based model programs straight down from OJJDP.
- A lot of pieces came to mind. One is to provide a series of training and educational programs to parents. That could be part of the 20,000 parent training hours. When parents can take part in a professional parent advocacy training, their children have decreased involvement in juvenile justice, decreased involvement in child welfare, and increased involvement in special education and mental health systems. That's close to evidence based. It's a promising practice. A program like that can be a great resource. Not only do parents receive education—and it can cover everything from conflict resolution to advocacy to professionalism and communication skills, to navigating the juvenile justice and special education systems. Then have a graduation with certificates. It gives parents that opportunity to recognize that they are not always that dysfunctional entity that they are told. And they can use that advocacy certificate in their job search. It makes them feel good about that parenting piece. When you are involved in the



juvenile justice system, there is not a lot of, "I feel good about this system that has entered my life. But now, that I have a certain level of education that I didn't have before, I can sit at the table, and I know what types of things I can provide and can be a tremendous member of my child's team."

- As part of a youth justice initiative, have youth caucus membership—for youth both incarcerated and not. When the youth come into the program, have them complete an intake evaluation to gather some data on them. So you know if they have a mental health disability, what it is. You know who their attorney is, what crime they committed, whether they had prior involvement, and who their parents are. In [state], they get a newsletter each month. If they are writing poetry or doing artwork, that is put in the newsletter, and that goes to the full membership. At the holidays, if they are a parent, the program will send their child's caregiver a Walmart gift card because it receives donations. Include a literary program. One program helped one of the youth caucus members publish a book. A volunteer took the youth's letters and put it in a book. That was a way for the youth to make money so when he did get out, he had a revenue stream. That's one way to support the youth caucus members. Respond to their requests as well. Reach out to them via email, and they may request help to review their appeal, for example.
- One of the things we have to focus more on is reentry. Many of our kids are released and they go back. We need to do a better job at that. And rethink about what that program might look like. Reentry has to be driven by the people who are most impacted. There must be value in that. We need to remove the punishment from the strategy.
- During the discussion on examples of best practices, participants shared the following program links in the chat:
 - o Youth Advocate Programs, Inc.
 - o Credible Messenger Justice Center's Become a Credible Messenger.
 - o Roca.

2. What are some challenges your region is currently facing when trying to serve young people at home, in their communities, with their families?

Funding. And an understating of the necessity for peer advocacy and peer support. There is this lack of understanding about what works and how peer advocacy and peer mentors and because when I think of reentry or any type of program—there has to be a peer in that program who supports the kids. There even has to be some peer advocacy or peer support for the parents and caregivers. Many times, when we provide interventions to families, we have to provide some level of positive interventions to the caregiver. Sometimes, they self-sabotage. It's sometimes, "What about me?" Sometimes the parents, depending on where they are at emotionally, they will attach themselves to the intervention and say to themselves, "When I was this age, I didn't get this," or "When I was her age, nobody provided that for me." We have to provide a level of healing for the entire family. So, I've had some professionals and providers say, "We don't have time for all of this," but if we are looking at obtaining the most positive outcomes for children and families, we have to think about that. Who better than to support the services than the parent or caregiver? It's just like in the education system. The kids who are behind when it comes to socio-economic factors have the greatest gains when parents are involved. If we are focused on improving outcomes, we have to recognize that there are different methods that work with different families, and that we need to consider all of that.



I echo the funding and recognizing what those needs are, and it relates to the earlier question. Another challenge is rural versus urban. When families are spread out and resources are spread out, there are "resources deserts." There's that crossover issue. [State] is a very white state and we have an influx of refugees and immigrants coming into our urban areas and some of the challenges around culture and language are more pronounced. You need to figure out the access points and add these other things, with systems not very flexible, and very clear racial and ethnic stereotypes and biases, and you're going to have to figure out how to recognize that stuff and push past it, and systems are awful at recognizing those things. Figuring out ways to educate around—I hate the word "rehabilitation"—and I think there needs to be some type of education around healing and restoration and atonement or accountability. The things that address the harm can't be more punitive and more traumatic. The system has already touched the child, that's a bad thing already on some level. There needs to be an acknowledgement that you want to say, they have also had an impact by the crime. It's not taking away their liberty any further. If you are trying to keep them at home, then you have to support things that don't feel punitive and monitoring. How do you do that in a political climate that really wants to punish people? OJJDP should really double down on that to support approaches and use language that is more in line with all of what I just described. You can't fix the way states behave, but you can incentivize states to acknowledge these things and try to think differently if they want your resources. Maybe it's piloting more of kinds of these innovative things. You can't make us less racist, but you can make us check our data and invest in things that are going to support that kind of shift.

3. If you had a magic wand, and no barriers existed, what would you say OJJDP's goal for serving young people at home, in their communities, with their families should be?

- Zero incarceration and detention. That's what it should be. Defining "zero" gets tricky because there are some residential placements that are not secure detentions. At least the severe places—the goal would be eliminating all of those. Some of those residential placements are tricky. But the big-picture goal is eliminating secure commitment and detention for children.
- I totally agree with that. The removal of the penal system. We have to rethink about the way we heal families and children that have been impacted by incarceration or even youth violence. Much of that is inclusion. Maybe OJJDP can offer something where we can split the states up into regions and every region has a community-based coalition that includes youth, young adults, parents, professionals, and providers. That gives us a self-governing coalition. One of the things that is missed is accountability for states and opportunities for parents and caregivers and youth to be involved where they can add positive input. There are opportunities for the day or for six hours, but that doesn't necessarily help me to become whole as a youth who has been incarcerated. I need to know that I belong to a coalition for my community or some type of group where we all come together and address the issues and also the positive interventions that we can put into place. We are involving their voice there. I almost feel that we are forming another organization within the region. A nonprofit that may be funded by the state. In that we offer parents and family members and youth a place where they can bring their ideas and ideology and they create their own "rehabilitation." What is "rehabilitation"? The people in the community know what that should look like—the ins and outs of it. We need to be community based and we need practice put in place so those most impacted are involved at all levels of decision making. Parents and youth want to know there is value for me and someone wants my input. I want to be one of the fixers. I want to add value.



4. What can OJJDP do to advance this key priority through the kinds of strategies and activities it undertakes? (For example, communications, webinars and training, publications, policy guidelines, and pilot programs.)

- organizations and nonprofits and as well as the states and territories. When we were funded, our program manager said, "Every time there is an opportunity like this, continue to submit the same proposal." Next time it came up, it was only offered to states. We understand that, but if our opportunity initially had only been offered to states, we would have never been able to recognize and realize the number of kids waived to the adult prison system. We could do an 8-city tour with an RV and just stop and provide services to families. There's a lot of great nonprofits out there. OJJDP should do a better job of supporting them in addition to supporting the states.
- We need publications around guidelines of core elements of maybe promising practices to get at some of this stuff. Prioritize the groups that are on the ground doing this type of work.

Breakout Room 3: Opening up Opportunities for System-Involved Youth

1. What does it mean to you to open up opportunities for youth involved in the juvenile justice system?

- Opening up opportunities for system-involved youth means that resilience is possible for youth in the system. This includes resilience of the individual and the communities that people are returning to. This is important for continued development of the justice-involved individuals.
- It also means considering the connection between the justice system and the child welfare system. Resilience of the individual and the communities that people are returning to.
- It also means understanding the root of the issues related to justice-involved youth, including brain development of adolescents and generational impact of various systems.
- Also, health disparities that have been exposed in our systems due to the COVID pandemic illustrate other underlying issues. These issues in healthcare can crossover to the issues in the justice system as well.
- It is also important to consider schools, mental health services, and the workforce as these topics relate to justice-involved youth. We can't allow the stigma affiliated with justice-involved youth to affect the whole community and these institutions and services.
- We need to accept that these systems have failed young people. This also includes looking at the racial/ethnic disparities in juvenile justice.
- We need to be fair with young people and consider where to invest money and resources to best help these youth. The data has proven that none of the systems have done a better job than what the communities could do for them.
- We need to address the underlying issues that have been harming young people and families.
- Schools can have a large impact on justice-involved youth before and after they become justice involved. When young people make mistakes at school, the only method that schools use to respond is law enforcement. When these youth return to the community, their school is not prepared to meet their needs. We are not investing enough in helping young people transition



- into their schools. There is more money in the systems than in schools, communities, and preventive measures for these youth.
- Oftentimes, schools and the ways that children interact and behave at schools are sometimes viewed in a bubble. Some think bad behaviors in school are isolated incidents that only occur in schools. We must recognize the home-to-school pipeline in which youth don't act out because of school, but because of other community factors as well.
- We need to recognize that kids spend a lot of time in schools. We need to consider how the schools can integrate more heavily into the community. There are some schools that do this and offer resources for the communities.
- People believe that schools exist to educate their citizens only, but they could go beyond this. We've shaped the school culture in a way that doesn't help kids learn and grow. We need more behavioral health specialists, social workers, and other professionals in order to help reshape the culture of school and their role in the community. This will help us to respond and cultivate good citizens. Schools can't do this work alone to help young people be successful and productive citizens. There needs to be partnerships between schools, the justice system, and other institutions and organizations.
- Brain development is another important factor to consider for opening up opportunities for justice-involved youth. People behave in certain ways at certain ages as a result of their brain development.
- a. What do you think are best practices for opening up opportunities for youth involved in the juvenile justice system?
- Achieve Charter School and the BRICK Education Network.

2. What are some challenges your region is currently facing when trying to open up opportunities for youth involved in the juvenile justice system?

- We don't differentiate enough between young people and adults entering the system.
 Probation fees is one example that increases the likelihood that youth will be reincarcerated and not reenter their communities. We should consider getting rid of fines and fees that can limit their growth and success after incarceration.
- Young people don't always think long term about their actions. We don't provide enough resources for them to combat this.
- Schools are not necessarily resourced to address young people's most pressing concerns.
- We should create more alternative places where people are more aware of the issues that young people face. There are not many spaces for young people in the system to be met without bias. Resilience is our responsibility to create. We need to bridge the gap between incarceration and their life as adults after exiting incarceration. There are not many organizations doing work specifically targeted toward justice-involved youth. Some organizations do not have the experience or interest to work with these populations. There are not many spaces that exclusively serve them.
- People want to revert to old ways. We do not have resources to be resilient enough to not revert to these old ways.
- Young people are not welcome, wanted, and respected in these spaces. We are not using or investing in mentoring programs for these youth.



3. If you had a magic wand, and there were zero barriers in the way, what would you say OJJDP's goal for opening up opportunities for system-involved youth should be?

- Investing in pro-social programs and the community are useful ways to open up opportunities for justice-involved youth.
- Investing in schools can help more kids attend.
- More social workers to mentor young people will help open up opportunities for justiceinvolved youth.
- We should do a complete analysis of all organizations that support young people in order to see what is missing and what is needed to expand their care.
- We must ensure that young people have hope by rebuilding the bridge between incarceration and readjusting to life after incarceration so that youth can still achieve dreams despite convictions.
- Getting rid of juvenile incarceration, given that the brain is developed at around 26 years old, would help youth by offering alternatives.
- We should create networks of care that young people and their families need.
- We should create alternative schools that are equipped for these young people or change our
 existing schools to help them. We should also get rid of school resource officers and offer more
 mental health services in schools.
- Mechanisms for mental health services are needed outside of schools too.

4. What can OJJDP do to advance this key priority through the kinds of strategies and activities it undertakes? (For example, communications, webinars and training, publications, policy guidelines, and pilot programs.)

- Communication is key.
- Webinars are important so people know what their goals are.
- Education and training are important.
- Programs to help create opportunities for youth will help to advance this priority.
- Partnering with schools and funding communities will help youth.

5. How can OJJDP support better cross-system collaboration to lead to improved opportunities for youth involved in the juvenile justice system?

- The systems have contributed to the harm toward youth. Each system gets a lot of money to provide the best resources so they should go to the communities and to practical programs.
- We need cross-system collaboration because we need more than just OJJDP.
- OJJDP could collaborate with the Department of Education to support education for justiceinvolved youth.
- OJJDP could collaborate with the Department of Labor when considering the qualifications for
 jobs that these young people encounter. Recidivism stems from a lack of opportunity for
 education, training, and jobs due to their criminal history and lack of resources to obtain these
 things. A pilot program between OJJDP and the Department of Labor would be useful to assist
 with this.
- Advocacy toolkits on mental health can also provide a viable mental health network to coordinate with OJJDP.

6. What kinds of strategies or activities is your state or region currently doing well?



- a. Do you have any specific examples of successful approaches, tools and techniques, or pilot programs that others might find useful?
- One organization wrote a toolkit that got turned into legislation for a pilot program. This legislation provides \$8.4 million for a 2-year pilot program in a few cities that are most impacted by youth incarceration.
- Juvenile Justice Commission in New Jersey handles secure care facilities that house juveniles.
 There is a proposal to close these facilities. Many are advocating for the closure of youth prisons.
- In New York, there is a mentoring program for youth where they are mentored by formerly incarcerated individuals or those impacted by the justice system. There are parent support programs for justice-involved youth. There are also community peer navigator trainings to help families understand the school-to-prison pipeline, mental health services, and other important resources. There are also professional development trainings to help them transition into adulthood.

7. What questions do you have?

- Will there be any formal response to these listening sessions? Are they only for consideration or do they go toward producing deliverables? What is the expectation from OJJDP with the listening sessions?
 - The facilitator responded that the listening sessions would inform future policy/guidance and help to develop policies/trainings.