



OJJDP FY 2022 National Listening Session: Feedback From National Organizations on OJJDP's Priorities

July 19, 2022 | 2–4 p.m. ET

Breakout Room 1: Treating Children as Children

1. What Does Treating Children as Children Mean to You?

- The first thing that comes to mind is understanding that children and young people are still learning. We need to be cognizant of the fact that they are still learning and developing skills. We need to be adding in their development.
- I think we also need to recognize this created legal fiction that adultifies our children because of the behavior they committed as a child. The behavior is not as relevant as their developmental level. All youth-serving systems need to be trained in and understand adolescent development, trauma-informed care, and cultural competency, and there needs to be a structure that holds systems accountable to those expectations.
- I agree, we have learned a great deal about child development, the effect of trauma on brain development, and social deterrents of health for child well-being, but there is still a lack of acceptance by the juvenile justice system. Child welfare agencies should utilize risk factors to identify youth to prevent deeper system involvement.
- I have been hearing that many counties are struggling to find age-appropriate programs. Some have seen an increase in youth ages 8–11 and are struggling to find programs for younger populations. In addition, with the raise-the-age initiatives, some counties need help identifying programming for older youth. There needs to be an increase in trauma-informed training and education about adolescent development.
- I see how subjective the justice process can be. It seems that so much depends on the state and the judge. I would like to see how it could be more uniform in nature across jurisdictions and judges.
- Building off what others were saying, children are still learning and developing. They have different needs from adults, and each child will have unique needs. We need to connect them to a path for life after they have been connected with the juvenile justice system.
- I think the approach needs to be more attitudinal versus programs. The system needs to understand children are still learning and should focus on helping them to learn and consider the context of the family in how we communicate with them. We cannot treat children without treating their loved ones.
- I strongly agree children are still developing neurologically and socially. They need support to develop the skills to make logical, rational decisions, the ability to learn from the mistakes they make, not be punished. When the system responds punitively, it is harmful. Children need support to grow and develop.
- I would like to add that decisions need to be based on the brain science. We know individuals' brains continue to develop up to age 25. There needs to be greater public education regarding the science and the harmful impact of children ending up in the juvenile justice system. The courts are slow to change. They do not treat children as children. Recently, there has been a move back toward the get-tough era policies. I think if we educated the community and judges about the neurological development science, we could stop the back slide.



- When I think about treating children as children, I think it's important to think about the impact of racism and the adultification of children of color that occurs across systems.
- I think we need to understand that children are learning. We need to change the system's focus toward learning and growth. In my experience, that makes our work more effective and meaningful.
- A struggle in my community is that everyone recognizes the positive impacts of restorative programs, but we do not have staff that are trained to facilitate these programs or who have trauma-informed care training. We need funding for technical assistance to fully implement our restorative justice programs, and we need to not only use them in schools and diversion programs, but also in community-based organizations like the Boys & Girls Club.
- There is a need for alternative crisis responses for youth that are provided by individuals who are specially trained and include both with peer family support.
- Some examples of family-focused best practices include family team conferencing, kinship and family navigators, family peer supports, Family First Therapy (FFT), Multisystemic Therapy (MST), Brief Strategic Family Therapy (BSFT), Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care (MTFC).
- With regard to public education, we have found that video content allowing system-involved kids to tell their own stories is imperative for public understanding and empathy. Our YouTube channel has amassed over 25 million views in the past 12 months, and the public comments on the videos are 95% positive regarding the treatment of children as children and keeping kids out of the adult criminal justice system.
- Law enforcement agencies need to develop appropriate policing strategies to work with youth, additional training should be provided for law enforcement regarding how children are different from adults and how to build into practice to keep youth out of the system.
- I think about how we can better leverage medical behavioral homes in the community where different youth-serving organizations intersect. I think this is a good opportunity for medical behavioral health homes to be the centralized hub of services for youth. In jurisdictions where primary care clinics were the provider for youth leaving detention, we have seen success. These providers can screen for early adverse events and trauma and refer youth to the appropriate services.
- I think we need to use science to educate juvenile justice system staff and stakeholders about the impacts of trauma and early adverse events on neurological development. I provided information about a young person's trauma history to a judge who reacted by saying, "I hear that about every kid in my court. I cannot take that into account." If judges are seeing a theme among the youth in their court, the fact judges do not make the connection between adverse childhood events and behavior demonstrates a lack of understanding. In addition, when a youth hasn't taken advantage of services, judges do not take the time to determine the reason why the youth did not engage in services. Often, they are not able to access the services.

2. What are some challenges your organization is currently facing when trying to treat children as children?

- I am hopefully the rollout of 988 [referring to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline] will address some of the issues related to mental health services, but there will still be a need for quality mental health services and there is a national shortage of mental health professionals.



- At the Mount Sinai Adolescent Health Center, they have a program for youth that come back home from detention. They are welcomed in this healthcare context instead of a juvenile justice office.
- There is a lack of mental health resources in rural communities.
- There is a need for funding to support special training and mental health staff well-being services.
- The reimbursement rates for Medicaid are low, which makes it difficult to find treatment providers.
- Judges should be trained in child neurological development.
- I hear from elected county officials across the country that there has been an increase in the need for youth mental health treatment providers, and that there is a lack of pediatricians with trauma-informed care training who can conduct mental health screenings. I also hear that county administrators are not able to find services for children in rural areas. The counties are using Recovery Act funds to increase services that focus on youth, like mobile crisis centers, crisis centers for youth, but there is a lack of trained staff.
- I would second everything said about mental healthcare access. And could add that Congress has debated a lot recently about increasing access for youth in schools, which is a good access point. But afterschool and summer programs are also a critical access point and a big part of youths' everyday life as kids. They spend more time out of school than in it.
- The high acuity youth, the kids with multiple challenges like child welfare involvement, mental health, substance abuse, and/or developmental disabilities have made it tough for our county and other counties across the state to meet the needs of kids in their homes. There is a need for short-term, for example 3-day, crisis stabilization beds combined with in-home behavioral specialists who work with kids and families in the home intensively, like every day from 4 to 9 p.m. to assist in real-time and deter disruptions.

3. The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP) 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 think the core requirements are the minimum of what should be done to protect children involved in the justice system. I know OJJDP has limitations, but the core requirement set the bar too low. I would encourage OJJDP to think about how they can expand the rights of children similar to [Scotland](#).
 - The Title II grants to states are so small that the money isn't really an incentive to participate.
 - I have found that when films of youth housed in adult jails and prisons are shared with policy makers, the realities of these policies that treat youth as adults, it has a big impact even with judges. There often is an out of sight, out of mind way of thinking. Once a judge makes a ruling in a case, they move on to the next case. I think these films could be helpful for training judges. These films have led to legislative changes in some states.
 - We got a protection added into a newly developed and adopted police policy for the local municipal police department that (among many other things) prohibits police from bringing



minors to adult jails, and even to monitor and protect arrested kids in police stations if adults are present.

- In 2017, youth were removed from our local jail now that there are no youth in adult jails in our state and it seems crazy to think that used to happen.
- In my community, when the statute was changed to prohibit detention for status offenses, everyone thought we would see a lot of pushback, but it was only the providers and some welfare agencies that pushed back because they didn't want to lose referrals.

b. Can we undertake any work with partners like the National Sheriffs' Association, the American Jail Association, or others to help reach the specified goals?

- I think any group that are gatekeepers, emergency room staff, school administrators, school boards, law enforcement agencies. I have seen that once these groups are educated about the impacts of treating children like adults, they become even stronger advocates than us.
- I would add that in addition to the gatekeepers, the full continuum of stakeholders that impact these youth from preventions to reentry.
- I would include all state and local politicians
- In my experience, all these groups want to learn how to better serve youth. I would think the people that run jails do not want kids in their facilities. I don't believe it is controversial.
- Do we know the rate of youth in adult jails by jurisdiction? How many states keep children in adult jails?
- Here is a link to data about youth in adult jails: <https://www.sentencingproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Youth-in-Adult-Courts-Jails-and-Prisons.pdf>.

c. What challenges, if any, do you anticipate facing as a result of the pandemic when enforcing the jail removal requirement to remove juveniles from adult jails and lockups?

- I would hope that the youth being detained in jail are charged with a serious offense. In [state], the closing of youth prisons and moving kids back to their communities has created an issue because the local facilities are designed for short stays that are less than 30 days, and they do not have the physical structure to provide the services needed for youth that will be there for long periods of time.
- The lack of accurate data has been a challenge. For example, some of our smaller towns probably do not report whether they temporarily hold kids in adult detention facilities.
- What I hear from my colleagues in the trenches is that the increase in length of stay leads to delays connecting youth to services.
- There have been ripple effects from the pandemic. Because staff are sick, youth cannot enroll in court order treatment. There are workforce issues in all sectors that serve these kids, not just juvenile justice. We also have seen an increase in the length of stay in addition to limited access to the facilities to prevent the spread of COVID-19. It has made it challenging for families to stay connected.
- At the beginning of the pandemic, there was a push to keep kids in the community but that is changing. All of society has COVID fatigue. In these facilities, it is worse for staff and youth. Lockdowns and isolation create stress. It seems that the idea of not placing kids in detention because it is traumatic has gone away.



- Volunteers that provide fun activities like art and music programs have not been allowed inside detention facilities so there are no opportunities for youth to engage in the things that help make detention bearable.
- [Responding to the Needs of Youth Involved With the Justice System During the COVID-19 Pandemic.](#)

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

- I would close all youth state prisons, keep all kids close to home surrounded by community support and families with access to education, training, and provide housing vouchers.
- I would echo that. We must abolish youth prisons. Detention should be the last resort. Shift funding from prisons to frontline prevention. Remove the idea that youth accused of serious offenses need to be treated differently from youth accused of minor offenses. Research has shown kids charged with serious offenses can be successful in the community.
- I think OJJDP should elevate core requirements as the minimum standards across the spectrum of the juvenile justice system.
- I think there needs to be a whole-system approach to preventing juvenile justice involvement.
- I think there needs to be more access to data and evidence-based decision making and accountability for those that make decisions that are not evidence-based.
- I am also inspired by [name redacted] and the possibility of a public health approach to delinquency.

5. 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?

- I think there needs to be increased access to peer and family support. I think OJJDP can support a convening of system leaders open to change to create learning communities.
- I think OJJDP could help facilitate systems of care and networks of care and use funding to bring partners together across discipline. Focus on early intervention programs, reentry services, help provide support for communities to show these efforts lead to better outcomes and save money. Support data-driven decision making.
- OJJDP can provide support to increase the general public's understanding of normal child development, normalizing behaviors that have been criminalized, reminding people how kids behave.
- OJJDP can provide training and support to prevent a get-tough backslide. OJJDP should be explicit that tough-on-crime approaches do not work.
- One incident will get a lot of public attention, and the general consensus will be a need for more punitive measures. Support [is needed] for how to address those issues and prevent quick responses to one incident.
- I think we don't spend enough time supporting staff growth and education. There needs to be a better approach to managing staff well-being.



- I think OJJDP could help provide funding for jurisdictions to implement multidisciplinary teams to create action plans for change in their communities.

6. How can OJJDP support better cross-system collaboration to lead to improved treatment of children as children?

- I think if OJJDP published data on the prevalence of youth held in adult jails and prisons that would be helpful.
- In the medical field there has been a shift toward value-based care, which improves outcomes while spending less money. This is just starting to be applied to pediatrics, which creates a create opportunity for youth healthcare centers that bring together child welfare, medical behavioral health homes, to create centers of excellence.
- I think that currently, a lot of money is spent on surveillance and incarceration by the juvenile justice system.
- Racial disparities are always noted as a concern and then we move on. It is too difficult. We can't talk about strong schools, green spaces, medical services, over-policing. We can't look at in a silo. We need to look at all systems and issues that lead to Black and brown youth disproportionate harm.
- I think Medicaid is an important element to a community continuum of care!
- The new striking gun bill has targeted funding for 21st century community learning centers, afterschool programs targeted to older youth. I think these funds could be used to increase collaboration upstream.
- The Juvenile Justice Advisory Groups are meant to make sure the voice of those impacted is heard. Elevate the voice of the youth—those with lived experience. We don't always see that happening in practice.
- There needs to be an emphasis on strengthening families. The bulk of work we do is critical to deeper system involvement
- [Name redacted] is also bringing up that it is not just about services, but also the importance of sports, arts, music, leadership. Fun well-being is about growing and learning sports, National Endowment for the Arts.

7. What additional ideas or recommendations do you think OJJDP should consider for the upcoming fiscal year?

- Another example from the medical approach is how we treat people with chronic medical illness transitioning from youth to adulthood. There is team that ensures they will have housing and proper supports. This model can be applied to the youth to better serve children in the juvenile justice system. In addition, we should think differently about the age we transition youth; 18 is an arbitrary number, we should expand that to include youth 18–24.

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

1. What Does Serving Young People at Home With Their Families Mean to You?

- We would like to see OJJDP be more accessible. Accessible material and processes are essential if we want to stop seeing youth going in and out of the system. There needs to be a focus on



staff being trained on accessibility and best practices, especially as it pertains to BIPOC [(Black, Indigenous, and people of color)].

- It is important for prosecutors to know what resources are available within their community. There is a huge information gap between agencies and entities.
- a. What do you think are best practices for serving young people at home, in their communities, with their families?**
 - Offering voluntary services has been extremely successful. Sometimes when services come with a lot of compliance requirements, it makes things tough for kids and their families.
 - Trauma-informed care is important. Community support needs to be embedded in programs where youth are already a part.
 - Make services individualized. Hiring community-based advocates is a must. These individuals are trained to help young people see their strengths and can provide them with tools on how to connect with others and how to achieve their personal goals.
 - Being able to serve youth in the community and deflect them from potential issues is critical. OJJDP should be able to support that build out of community-based services, so youth can serve within their communities and be successful.
- b. Do you have specific examples of implementing community-based alternatives and involving families in the treatment of youth?**
 - Better resources for youth transitioning into adulthood and then giving them strength to stay out of systems.
 - Implement better programs within schools.

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

- a. What are your current experiences with providing alternatives to incarceration?**
- b. What are some barriers to providing in-home and community-based programming to youth?**
 - We have a true problem with law and policy. Sometimes, it's in the books and other times, it is the practice. Young people are being pulled from their families because of this.
 - Credible messenger is viably important. Holistic support for the entire family is also greatly needed. If there was one point person that knew everything when supporting a family, that would make things less overwhelming for them.
 - Community agencies need to continue to talk together to know what is needed and there is a gap in this.
 - There are not enough programs that provide holistic wraparound services. Our organization refers youth in our program to community-based providers and there are just not enough who have the capacity to meet the whole family's needs.
 - Being able to hire people to support the communities we serve has been a challenge.
 - Paying people a living wage who go out and do the services is also a huge problem.
 - Providers want a sufficiently built-out system of alternatives to incarceration and admit this is very difficult. There just isn't enough funding to support this.



- Housing is a major crisis, and it needs to be more accessible. Need to focus on family or youth centers.
- Need to have someone who can navigate the system. Need to think how OJJDP can support the institutionalizing of this.
- Emergency funds are difficult to apply for and this causes barriers for organizations.
- Organizations that provide family-based therapy are essential and there are just not enough providers.

3. In what ways does your organization involve families in the treatment of young people in their homes?

- Our organization helps youth transitioning into adulthood. Peer-to-peer classes, where family members can learn about what they need to do for their youth with disabilities.
- We include the family as a part of the decision-making process.
- We also include LGBTQ+ trainers who teach families about being LGBTQ+.
- Our organization makes accessibility of resources a priority, so we are able to serve many more within our community.
- Our organization is meeting the family where they are. The goal is to identify families and their needs to ensure that kids are safe at home. We hire people within their neighborhoods who will do the check-ins.

4. What are the arguments for and against serving children at home and in their communities?

- The con is that some people do not have housing, so what does that look like? We also understand that not every child has a safe place at home, so that is something to consider.
- If people are returned back to their communities but their needs are not addressed, it does not help young people. We need programs that are well supported and schools with officials that are well trained, if we want to even think of having kids go back home.
- In most cases, we would like to see youth having issues being addressed at home through programs. In some situations, there is a feeling that youth should not be served at home, in their communities. One of the barriers is not having access to the correct resources for that youth or having all of the information needed to make a comprehensive decision.
- A con is that leadership members do not have information of these wraparound programs.
- We work with youth in the youth system and adults in the adult system, and the trauma that is endured is so incredibly increased. Incarcerated-based anything is a big harm.

5. 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?

- We don't have federal funding, just local. In a perfect world, we want to see people to just trust the providers as they are experts in their field. There are so many loopholes that providers have to jump through to get that funding currently.
- Think about who is getting access to the services and where the specific barriers are for certain families. Funding, guidance, support, would be able to fill in these gaps.



- No youth prison and detention facilities. People need jobs and this would force people to rethink these spaces. Find families for these kids and have them integrated into the community to maximize the best outcomes.
- I would like to see OJJDP take the lead for interagency collaboration to get the required cooperation and investment needed. There are a lot of resources well beyond DOJ and OJJDP that should also be considered.

6. 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.)

- What policies, guidance, or communications would be helpful for OJJDP to develop to support the priority of serving young people at home, in their communities, with their families?
- Getting youth heavily involved. Either if youth are currently in the system or have prior experience, it is important to have them part of the conversation.
- Find some way of highlighting best practices so that providers can address real barriers a community is facing. Viable alternatives and finding ways to highlight those would be great (conferences, webinars).
- More examples of groups that are effectively serving youth and families with community-based alternatives.
- It's always very helpful to understand how the agency is thinking about your goals/strategies and priorities, so any form of communication (handouts, presentations, etc.) are most useful to those of us who are working to implement and carry out the work in the community.
- Regular listening sessions throughout the fiscal year with providers on the ground serving juvenile justice.
- Creating a Youth Leadership Council that could be part of this work.
- Perhaps every section/function at OJJDP could think about how their section could further this goal through their programming, communications, etc.
- Supportive employment programs for employers who hire youth.
- Have conversations with other sectors—council of mayors, governors' association—and bringing all those groups together.

7. What additional ideas or recommendations do you think OJJDP should consider for the upcoming fiscal year?

- Having OJJDP partner with a major network would be great because it would help educate parents, as opposed to only the people who work within the field.
- Use social media to our advantage to connect with youth.
- Bring law enforcement into the conversation as they are the ones youth contact first.

8. What questions do you have?

- Does OJJDP share mentoring resources with juvenile justice professionals?
 - This is under OJJDP's intervention division that goes out to states, tribes, localities, etc.
- Will there be another call that focuses on that funding stream/focus area, particularly given the overall percentage of your budget that it represents?
 - Unsure, but OJJDP will flag this and get back to participant on it.



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?

- In general, figuring out how the policy, structure, advertisement—how everything about an opportunity can be suited for the intended audience. Sometimes, people should know about an opportunity, but they don't know about it, or they don't fit to it. Be intentional about every aspect of it and as helpful as possible, making it possible for all the kids who need it. That level of intentionality is difficult, but really important.
- We really want to look at supports, not just the services that youth really need. And look at the family and the services families need. For example, transportation and child care for them to really benefit from evidence-based practices and other services in the community.
- What does opportunity mean and do young people have autonomy and agency? They are often not included in the opportunities. Adults set the tone for what those opportunities look like. This is even more important in a post-pandemic world. See what exists in the community and what gaps exist in the community to afford that agency.
- We need to be focusing on wraparound supports for the youth and the family and including youth and family voices in the process of coming up with opportunities.

a. What do you think are best practices for opening up opportunities for youth involved in the juvenile justice system?

- Youth that are literally involved in the juvenile justice system because they are in a facility. One of the things I found the most effective was to constantly ask the question, "What would these children be able to do if they were in the community and how can we provide those opportunities here?" Like competing against other schools in sports. So, we did that, and they were able to play against other kids. How can we recreate those opportunities here?
- We are a community-based program. That intake process is about defining risk level and mental health needs. We go more expansive: What is the vision they have for themselves as they grow into adulthood? What is their image of success for themselves? And then guide them along that warm handoff. We do a lot of trust building. Like, if they don't like someone in the program they are in, we can help them navigate that. We started because there was a gap in having a consistent adult. Healing-centered engagement goes beyond trauma-informed care. Focus on how to build those healing-centered systems of care.

2. How important is it to have family involved? (extra question)

- It's important to have that component, and we must make sure that component is culturally responsive. Particularly for girls, to make sure we are stopping generational cycles of abuse and trauma.
- Systems and organizations are redefining what families mean. In the past, systems defined it as blood relation, and we are seeing that is really changing. And systems really need to involve those people the child considers to be family in child and family team meetings and helping shape family support services. Eliminate barriers that prevent people from being involved with a young person because they don't meet that definition of "family."



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

- A challenge for our youth is educational options beyond the traditional education. Especially look at those pathways a little more deeply so the likelihood of youth who have offended and are in placement reoffending might be less. Transition coordination between the facility and the child's home-based school. How might traditional schools or other pathways be used to engage kids in school?
- Reentry. Education is important, but so are family and community supports. We need alternatives to incarceration. Sealing expungement of records. We want to be mindful of that as a huge challenge as kids try to get into the workforce. And even food insecurity—I know that's more of a state issue, but just wanted to put that out there.
- Jobs and housing are the two largest collateral consequences. We only have 3 months for a student to have housing services when they come home. They only have 3 months of support. They have to do all these really adult things during that time. We need long-term housing options. A lot of our young people lose jobs. They get the job, then they lose it when the background check comes in. We are trying to work with employers. There needs to be more integrated holistic support. Housing doesn't talk to jobs, and jobs don't talk to education.
- We have this expectation that kids in the system should be independent adults without a lot of effort or support, and it's very time limited. And we need to make sure we can provide those supports in less time-limited way. We need to remove those barriers. We monetize the system in such a way that those who are the most wanting are the most burdened. If they had the additional resources, they would be able to get out of the system. But some have to pay off their fines and fees.
- Collateral consequences of having a record. Even consider automating expungement.

4. Please share your ideas for reducing referrals and the flow of youth from the mental health system to juvenile justice.

- In [state], we have mobile crisis teams that families, youth, anyone can call, and they can manage that over the phone, or they can come out on a call. Might be someone with a youth specialty background, not law enforcement. Another option is respite care for a few days if you need it to keep your child out to the juvenile justice system. They can do an assessment and see what their particular needs are and keep them out.
- In [city], they have mental health embedded in the schools. Especially in the schools that have needs. They are helping the youth who have left school and been out for 2 years and try to get them to reengage. [YouthBuild](#) is part of the workforce system. They help build skills as well as help kids get their GED. Youth are learning camaraderie, engagement, they are building homes. Sometimes even their parents get the homes they've built when they are done!
- We are trying to get our department of juvenile justice under public health. That would align it more toward mental health and less toward justice.

a. What ideas do you have to reduce referrals from the education system to the juvenile justice system?



- Changing the whole culture of the school to include mindfulness practices. Teachers are trained, principals are leading the cause, central offices are funded. So, the whole culture is shifted away from punitive to healing centered.
- A lot of young people just lack a caring adult in their life. One way is through school, and another is through community-based mentoring organizations. But they don't have the resources to participate. Building those resources up is a smart way to prevent youth from getting into the system and to help them when they exit the system, too.
- System collaboration and cooperation are critically important.
- There's a lot of funding at the federal level for the programs people have talked about such as school climate and healthy systems, healthy students. Title I, Part D and SAMSHA systems of care grants are examples. If we could make a request of all the agencies to identify some of those high-flying programs, we may be able to see some common characteristics and common threads to implement. And then the data—that could help us focus more on what's really working out there.
- Community schools are getting more funding this year. This puts community partners in the school to support both youth and families. [State] made all Title I schools eligible for being a community school. That includes an afterschool program, summer enrichment, and services. Community schools are partnerships. They engage others and have a health center on site. And it's a growing effort around the country. Quite a bit of ARC money goes to it. [State] allows Title I schools to do this in a large way. School may be the hub of the community anyway, but this way, it becomes a hub for the family, too. Summer programs provide activities and healthy food in the summer. It's not just educational activities, it's fun things too. There is some money that's new this year. But afterschool and summer programs have other funds as well. But the need for having a caring adult is real. This is another way of having a caring adult in a child's life. It's crucial. Community schools are growing.
- Community schools *are* the hub of the community. Schools in my community opened up during the pandemic to provide meals to families. Unfortunately, that program ended, and people thought food insecurity was solved somehow, but it's not.
- Afterschool programs did that too during COVID. So, they did that virtually and delivered activity kits and brought them to parents. And they were delivering meals that way too.

5. If you had a magic wand, and no barriers existed, what would you say OJJDP's goal for opening up opportunities for system-involved youth should be?

- Community. There's a severe lack of trust between communities and government agencies. Communities are doing what they can to keep young people out of the system and then you have a very bureaucratic system to implement the best-practice programs and the connection to the community is really nonexistent. I don't know if this is even in OJJDP's wheelhouse. Make sure the funding gets into the hands of the community to use. Credible messenger leaders have a very close proximity to that. I think that would help build that trust again.
- I've seen that community-based organizations don't have sophisticated grant writers who don't have the structure, but they have all the heart of the community. We need to help them grow so they can provide the services that the people in their community need. They need some additional support and help for that organization to be in the best position to partner with government to provide services to youth and families.



- A lot of the breakdown in trust is that it feels disingenuous to offer opportunities when the only reason the opportunities are required is because the kids weren't protected beforehand, earlier in the pipeline. There is 90 percent African American bind over. To walk in and say we have opportunities for you, it's almost purposeless. That fundamental trust issue is central to this conversation.
- For many years, OJJDP has led the way with the core requirements. I'd like to see the core requirements address automatic bind over. We need to expand the age to 25. We need to—I'd like to see OJJDP take the lead in evaluating those core requirements. We don't want the juvenile justice system to exist the way it is now. We want to make sure we are addressing all these other issues. It's not to say people [in the juvenile justice system] shouldn't have jobs. We can have all the jobs we need to have all of us connected with each other. Get rid of the justice system altogether as it exists today.
- I'm actually behind that goal. Our goal is to eliminate any facilities that are operating as prison systems. They should be small, close to home, and kept for the least amount of time before returning youth to the community. There are lots of examples of that across the county and even in Europe.

6. 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.)

- OJJDP can write guidance or a policy brief highlighting promising models throughout the country that other jurisdictions can replicate.
- The field looks to OJJDP policy as really helpful. Any OJJDP guidance that centers around these issues we talked about today and lifting up any promising models and partnering that with solicitations and grants and promoting the kind of innovation we talked about today—folks would like to see that. It could spur more pilot programs.
- I'd like to see OJJDP do more research in the field to show the efficacy of certain practices. OJJDP used to do a lot of research.
- We've used the Model Reentry Guide a lot, but I think that's old now. It may need to be revised. Research is one of the last things we are able to fund at the scale that's required. Capacity building is needed to help smaller organizations understand how to navigate to position themselves to get access to that funding. Maybe a cohort model and in-depth work—not just a one-hour webinar.
- Most agencies don't have a grant writer or development person on staff that that's their job. They usually have to wear a bunch of hats.
- There is some great OJJDP funded training and TA we'd like to see continue, such as judicial trainings and institutes that have helped train judges to discourage justice involvement for youth. So kids that have been sexually exploited don't end up in the system and not rely on punitive outcomes. Helps ensure that we are providing community-based alternatives.

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

- Allowing for dual jurisdiction intervention and support, particularly in jurisdictions where involvement in juvenile justice closes the foster care door and the services associated with it. Have both systems work collaboratively to provide services to youth in need and provide a



greater multidisciplinary response. If there isn't a multidisciplinary response team, convene a meeting and have all those players at the table and have the child have a say in what's going on, and the family—as defined by that child—can intervene. No one system is going to solve these issues alone.

- Potentially requiring in an RFP that other child service agencies must sign on to the work too. If they're not providing dollars, then human resources to support this effort. I know this exists in some portfolios of work but might work in other areas that are not covered by this work.
- A reentry coordination council with youth involved. Does DOJ have youth involvement? The [Executive Order on Advancing Effective, Accountable Policing and Criminal Justice Practices to Enhance Public Trust and Public Safety](#) has a specific section on this reentry council.
- OJJDP is often a response to violence. What kind of stance could it take in preventing youth from getting involved in the first place? That means really looking at the whole continuum.
- For community-based organizations, require community-based involvement. Require that impacted youth and families have to be at the table. Youth can provide that perspective of what it feels like to be a 17-year-old attending a [family advocacy program] meeting about why they may potentially take away all of your services.
- OJJDP can convene a listening session with young people who have been system-impacted themselves. What are some of the gaps? What are some of the promising programs? We can promote greater collaboration. This would be a great opportunity to hear from young people themselves.
- Let's make sure that when we do invite young people to the table, we compensate them.

8. What additional ideas or recommendations do you think OJJDP should consider for the upcoming fiscal year?

- Have "one child, one judge" policies with a focus on [adverse childhood experiences] (ACEs) as a root cause for youth involvement. And also build youth resiliency to ACEs.