

# **THE CASE FOR COLLECTIVE IMPACT:**

---

**Addressing Racial and Ethnic Disparities  
in the Juvenile Justice System in  
Allegheny County**

**JUNE 2020**

**SUBMITTED BY COMMON CAUSE CONSULTANTS**

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

<b>3</b>	Introduction
<b>6</b>	Background of Developing RED Theory
<b>7</b>	Two Frameworks for Understanding Racial and Ethnic Disparities (RED)
<b>10</b>	Unacceptable Gaps Despite Significant Improvements
<b>12</b>	Data Showing the Presence of RED in Pennsylvania
<b>13</b>	Where Youth are Entering the System
<b>16</b>	Despite Disparities, Community Organizations are Making an Impact
<b>17</b>	Methodology
<b>18</b>	Themes of Research
<b>29</b>	Conclusion
<b>31</b>	Appendix

# INTRODUCTION

---

## **Racial and Ethnic Disparities (RED), formerly known as Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC), within the justice system are a clear issue at the national, state, county, and city levels.**

While there have been efforts to address this problem, a gap still remains within Pennsylvania's justice system relating to the disproportionate impact of referrals, implementation of policies and practices, and enforcement of laws relating to youth of color. It has led to unequal treatment of minority groups and unsustainable outcomes for all stakeholders. It also misses the goal of addressing the social determinants of health and thus aligning state objectives with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

- Black youths in the U.S. are five times more likely to be detained or committed than their white counterparts (The Sentencing Project, 2017)
- Black youths in Pennsylvania are four times more likely to be arrested and five times more likely to be incarcerated than their white counterparts (Sickmund, et. al., 2019)
- Black youths in Pennsylvania are more likely to be charged with a more serious offense than any other racial group (Sickmund, et. al., 2019)
- Black youths in Allegheny County are over six times more likely to be detained than their white counterparts

In the fall of 2018, in order to understand the role of RED in Allegheny County, Amachi Pittsburgh, The Pittsburgh Foundation and Allegheny County Juvenile Probation convened local stakeholders, philanthropic, nonprofit, law enforcement, and government communities. During the convening, stakeholders reviewed information and input across all levels of the juvenile justice system,

including the systemic factors that lead to the disproportionate outcomes. They also reviewed input and experiences from local communities, school systems, individual youth, and youth population data. This information and resulting discussion combined, brought forth the current limitations present within the region. Additionally, The Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Committee, 2019) shared statewide data and led a call to action urging stakeholders to understand and address RED locally.

The overarching conclusion of this gathering and attendant research is that developing and expanding a collective impact approach — a centralized infrastructure, a dedicated staff, and a structured process that leads to a common agenda, shared measurement, continuous communication, and mutually reinforcing activities (Kania & Kramer, 2011) — is the best methodology for addressing RED for youth of color who encounter the justice system in Allegheny County. The need for an effort that addresses both prevention methods and intervention protocol is evident.

This report summarizes and furthers the work of the gathering in 2018. It details findings related to RED data gathered from a host of federal, state and local resources. It outlines information on trends, current and past policy, promising practices as well as community input, and feedback to provide a comprehensive view of the juvenile justice system, especially as it relates to RED in Allegheny County.

The research shows the presence of RED occurring in Pennsylvania. Interviews with stakeholders who regularly interact with the juvenile justice system or work within the system have identified clear themes around what is and isn't working. These findings point to an opportunity for community-driven efforts to improve how the juvenile justice system serves communities of color and executes work around prevention and intervention.

**Community stakeholders recommend:**

- Improving training resources for judges, school districts, and police
- Reviewing, refining, replacing, or removing current tools that target efficiency improvements but lead to unacceptable outcomes
- Improving coordination and options of supportive services for both prevention and intervention, i.e behavioral health resources, and
- Improving awareness of efforts that individual organizations are working on to support a coordinated approach to tackling RED

Schools need to tackle the “school to prison pipeline” problem by improving the way disciplinary issues are handled. Youth perspectives on justice system encounters need to be incorporated into policy development, and support needs to be provided before any encounters with the justice system.

The results clearly show that the primary focus for combating RED needs to be the prevention of youth entering the justice system at all.

If encounters are unavoidable after all other measures have been taken, support needs to also be provided to youth and families during and after involvement with the justice system.

Understanding how RED happens, what the system is currently doing to exacerbate it, and learning from the proven models that have started to redress these systemic failures is necessary for Allegheny County to create racial equity and justice so that youth are treated rationally, fairly, and effectively. While Pennsylvania has made significant strides in education and awareness related to RED, the gathered research, experiences and data all show that there is much left to do.



# ABOUT THE RESEARCH STEERING COMMITTEE

**Amachi Pittsburgh, the Allegheny County Juvenile Probation Office, and The Pittsburgh Foundation, provided guidance for the research within this report.**

## **AMACHI PITTSBURGH**

Amachi Pittsburgh seeks to provide support for youth with parents who are incarcerated. Since their founding, the organization has focused on breaking intergenerational cycles of incarceration through mentoring and family strengthening as well as youth advocacy and leadership development programming. Over the years, the organization has provided thought leadership for many efforts affecting youth who have connections to the criminal justice system at the local, state and federal level. Due to capacity limitations, Amachi recognized two key realities: 1) its focus area involves issues that are far more complex than its direct services model could effectively address; and 2) the demand for its services far exceeds the agency's capacity. Thus, the only way to reach those in need and to move the needle systemically is to supplement its direct program model with an advocacy and policy agenda to work collaboratively on incorporating racial equity and justice across systems. Amachi believes that success in this space will require the presence of a backbone entity to guide the work. As a co-convenor of the original stakeholder session, Amachi has remained engaged and is helping to steer this effort.

## **ALLEGHENY COUNTY JUVENILE PROBATION OFFICE**

The Juvenile Probation Office in Allegheny County has been an active participant in understanding the inequalities present in juvenile justice outcomes. It continues to

make progress on reducing the number of youth that come into contact with the system through data-driven efforts. It does this in collaboration with local community groups and nonprofits. In the past, JPO conducted a series of forums to reduce arrests for minority youth by improving interactions between minority youth and law enforcement officers. Their current goal is to raise awareness of the effectiveness of a collective impact approach and create a structure for sustained collective impact efforts. That objective motivated their participation as one of the co-conveners for this work.

## **THE PITTSBURGH FOUNDATION**

For over 75 years, The Pittsburgh Foundation has been dedicated to improving the quality of life for the region's residents. Among its highest priorities in recent years has been to advance the conversation around how to improve juvenile justice outcomes and develop new resources to eliminate inequities. In 2015, the Foundation's program staff launched the Juvenile Justice Pilot to gather data from youth and develop new strategies with their input. This project led to recommendations such as identifying opportunities to support prevention and diversion activities, and engaging youth themselves as advocates for changes that would help their peers avoid system involvement. Encouraged by that effort, Foundation staff co-convened a gathering of juvenile justice stakeholders alongside Juvenile Probation and Amachi Pittsburgh in 2018.

# BACKGROUND OF DEVELOPING RED THEORY

---

## Solving the problem of racial and ethnic disparities in the juvenile justice system has been a national effort spanning decades.

At the federal level, the *Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act* (JJJPA) created an office to administer the Act and outlined four core protections (Coalition for Juvenile Justice, n.d.):

1. Deinstitutionalization of Status Offenders, keeping youth who are status offenders from being held in detention facilities or adult jails.
2. “Sight and Sound,” to keep juvenile offenders from having contact with adult offenders even if kept in the same facility.
3. “Jail Removal,” disallowing youth in adult jails/prisons except under limited circumstances.
4. Addressing Disproportionate Minority Contact, in an effort to address the over-representation of minority youth in the justice system.

This Act has been renewed and refined over the years. It acknowledges the importance of distinguishing youth offenders from adult offenders as youth cannot be assumed to have the same level of responsibility or same motivations as adult offenders convicted of the same crime. Nevertheless, this piece of legislation is just a start to the work required to improve outcomes in the state.

The Act also established the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). The most recent and arguably wide-reaching federal policy attempt to improve the juvenile justice system was the 2018 reauthorization of the JJJPA as the *Juvenile Justice Reform Act* of 2018. The recent iteration of the act sought to finally move the juvenile justice system from a punitive adult justice model to one that was

driven by community-based programs. The 2018 law updated the act with current research and practice in that it addressed dangerous confinement practices, improved conditions and educational services, supported adding evidence-based practices to address issues like trauma, added understanding of special populations (e.g. tribal youth), and increased accountability.

Additionally, via this Act, the federal government adopted new language to describe the problem, replacing the former and commonly used “disproportionate minority contact” to what is deemed a more accurate terminology of “racial and ethnic disparities” (Campaign for Youth Justice, 2019). That is the terminology that will be used throughout this report. The Act defines “racial and ethnic disparities” as “minority youth populations [being] involved at a decision point in the juvenile justice system at disproportionately higher rates than non-minority youth.” The Act is also more specific about expectations of states to “implement policy, practice, and system improvement strategies to identify and reduce racial and ethnic disparities within the juvenile justice system.” These expectations include identifying and analyzing data on race and ethnicity at decision points along the system (state, local, or tribal) to determine “which points create racial and ethnic disparities among youth who come into contact with the juvenile justice system.”

# TWO FRAMEWORKS FOR UNDERSTANDING RACIAL AND ETHNIC DISPARITIES (RED)

---

RED is considered to be the result of either differential offending (i.e., minority youth are assumed to commit more crimes or commit more serious crimes) or differential treatment (i.e., where the juvenile justice system treats minority youth differently).

These two theoretical frameworks have been the key driver of discussions and studies of RED since 2005.

## **DIFFERENTIAL OFFENDING**

The differential offending framework centers on the individual. This perspective requires that causes of juvenile offenses be “sought outside the court system” by looking at individual, family, and neighborhood factors that are related to offending.

For example, in 2009, research found that much of the difference in arrest rates between white and African American boys was due to “contextual risk factors for African American boys across multiple domains.”

This framework also assumes differences in treatment of minority youth due to legal factors such as prior record and severity of crime which are often related to “minority centered contexts for risk” (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2014).

## **DIFFERENTIAL TREATMENT**

The differential treatment framework concentrates on the “structure of justice decision-making acts that can disadvantage minority youth.” An OJJDP report refers to this as “bias theory” which argues that minority youth suffer harsher consequences than white youth “at each stage of the juvenile justice decision-making process because the system treats minority youth differently (and more punitively).”

This framework also highlights the psychological elements that lead to RED using research into racial threat theory: “In this framework, decision-makers are influenced by emotions driven by the perception of minority youth as threatening to middle-class standards and public safety” (Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2014).

## **NEW RESEARCH ON THE PSYCHOLOGICAL REALITY FOR YOUTH OFFENDERS**

Emerging research in understanding and addressing juvenile criminal behavior and disproportionate contact with minority youth includes the National Research Council’s (NRC) findings in the book, “Reforming Juvenile Justice: A Developmental Approach” (National Research Council, 2013). In short, this book explained that, because of the neurological development youth undergo from ages 10–17, it is impossible to responsibly assume the same accountability and motivations for youth offenders as is assumed for adult offenders.



A more recent study from the International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health entitled, “Mental Illness and Juvenile Offenders” (Underwood & Washington, 2016) indicates that there is a higher prevalence of mental disorders among youth offenders.

Understanding the nature of these disorders and how they impact interactions with the justice system is vital to designing a system that is rational and responsive.

**The Robert F. Kennedy Children’s Action Corps identified three key distinctions as part of their developmental approach to justice:**

- Adolescents are less able to regulate their own behavior in emotionally charged contexts.
- Adolescents are more sensitive to external influences such as the presence of peers and the immediacy of rewards.
- Adolescents are less able to make informed decisions that require consideration of long-term consequences.

# TIMELINE OF EFFORTS THAT SUPPORT JUVENILE JUSTICE

2009



## INTERBRANCH COMMISSION ON JUVENILE JUSTICE (ICJJ)

The Interbranch Commission on Juvenile Justice was created in 2009 to investigate the circumstances that led to corruption in the juvenile court of Luzerne County resulting in federal criminal charges against two judges, to restore public confidence in the administration of justice and to prevent similar events from occurring there or elsewhere in the Commonwealth.

2012



## ALLEGHENY COUNTY COMMISSION ON JUVENILE JUSTICE

Convened to assess Allegheny County's juvenile justice practices and make further recommendations to ensure best practices consistent with the ICJJ recommendations.

2016



## BLACK GIRLS EQUITY ALLIANCE BEGINS

Convened by the Gwendolyn J. Elliot Institute at Gwen's Girls.

## PENNSYLVANIA'S JOINT STATE GOVERNMENT COMMISSION

Releases report on Discipline Policies in Pennsylvania's Public Schools and calls for an end to zero tolerance policies.

2017



## A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF YOUTH AND THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

A 100 Percent Pittsburgh Pilot Project is released by the Pittsburgh Foundation.

2018



## SCHOOL SAFETY TASK FORCE

Convened by Governor Wolf and recommendations are released.

## JUST DISCIPLINE PROJECT

Shares the disproportionality in suspensions among schools in the Greater Pittsburgh region.

## PA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION SCHOOL SAFETY REPORT

Highlights 5 Pittsburgh Schools that arrest the most students.

2019



## BLACK GIRLS EQUITY ALLIANCE

Releases Juvenile Justice Report: *Institutionalized Inequity: Pathways to Juvenile Justice for Black Girls in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County.*

# UNACCEPTABLE GAPS DESPITE SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENTS

## In Pennsylvania, efforts have been made to improve the approach to juvenile justice.

The state has even been identified as having a strong program resulting from the Balanced and Restorative Justice efforts as part of Act 33 (Fifth Judicial District, County of Allegheny, n.d.). State and county programs have made huge strides in improving the outcomes of the juvenile justice system, including the creation of the Juvenile Justice System Enhancement Strategy (JJSES) (Evidenced-based Prevention and Intervention Support, n.d.) based on the work during the Model for Change Initiative, the objectives of which were to make juvenile justice systems “more fair, effective, rational and developmentally appropriate” (Models for Change, n.d.). However, there are clear examples where the state is failing in the principles of this effort.

Research conducted for this report shows that black youths are more likely to be arrested, charged, processed, and detained with little to no consideration for extenuating circumstances, the individual’s context, or even including awareness of environmental factors.

While the total number of youth incarcerations is down, the proportion of minority youth incarcerations as part of that population has increased. In Pennsylvania, African-American youths are only 14.1% of the youth population but are 53.9% of the juvenile detainees.

In Allegheny County alone, when compared to their white counterparts, black male youths are 3.75 times more likely to be arrested on charges of robbery, 5.35 times more likely to be arrested for motor vehicle theft, and 9.3 times more likely for possession of or receiving stolen property.

The state has attempted to design tools based on objective factors to reduce the incidence of bias in assessing and charging offenders, but these tools have built-in bias and are either applied imperfectly or lead to unacceptable outcomes. For example, the Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory 2.0 (YLS/CMI 2.0™) is a “gender-informed, culturally-informed, strengths-focused risk/needs tool” that classifies any efforts to predict reoffending within juvenile populations. However, there are concerns about how this and other tools are applied, whether these tools are being applied in inappropriate situations, and if the results of these tools are being ignored when the people applying them disagree with their conclusions. Personal bias is still very much an issue even with these “objective” instruments.

The Pennsylvania Council of Chief Probation Officers’ PA Detention Risk Assessment Instrument (PaDRAI) tool was designed as a “concise, structured decision-making instrument used to assist in the critical decision of whether to securely detain a youth, release to an alternative to detention (ATD), or release to the custody of

a parent or responsible adult during the period that the youth is awaiting his/her juvenile court hearing.” That objectivity is eliminated when, as does happen, the recommendations of that tool are overridden by general rules created by probation.

In the state of Pennsylvania, the research shows that there has been an evolving perspective on the issues around juvenile justice, and a growing understanding that it requires several improvements to change disproportionate outcomes for minority youth. Programs like the JJSES, as an offshoot of the Models for Change system, have improved the focus in areas like offering alternatives to traditional

probation responses, enhancing the connection between minority populations and police, and a greater reliance on data to get a more objective understanding of the reality on the ground. These are all successes that should be recognized.

Nevertheless, the data show that RED is a phenomenon in Pennsylvania as well as nationally, and there are even some metrics where the state has a higher rate of disproportionate treatment of minority youths than at the national level.



# DISPROPORTIONATE MINORITY CONTACT IN PENNSYLVANIA

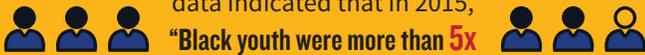


## DEMOGRAPHICS

Compared to the total U.S. population, all ethnic populations have grown disproportionately to the white youth population since at least 2010.

## NATIONAL

According to the Sentencing Project, Department of Justice data indicated that in 2015, **“Black youth were more than 5x as likely to be detained or committed compared to white youth.”**



**56.8%** of detainees in 2018 were African-American, despite representing just **16.2%** of all youth in the United States that year.

In 2015, the black youth placement rate in detention facilities:

**433 per 100,000**

White youth placement: **86 per 100,000**

Black youths experienced higher rates of arrest and incarceration for multiple serious crimes:

**22x HOMICIDE** | **4.4x ROBBERY**

## PENNSYLVANIA

Black youth represented **53.9%** of all youth detained in 2017 despite representing only **16.2%** of the Pennsylvania population aged 10 to 17.

**This is higher than the national average for black youth.**

### ALLEGHENY COUNTY

**68.2%** of secure detention admissions were black youth.

Black students across Allegheny County were suspended at a rate of approximately

**41 students per 100**

as compared to only **5.6 suspensions for every 100 non-Black students.**

**70%** of suspensions in Allegheny County in 2015–2016 were attributed to issues of “conduct” and not more severe school safety-related infractions.

Overall, **68%** of all suspensions in Allegheny County went to Black students.

In 2015, Pennsylvania ranked **5<sup>th</sup>** among all 50 states in per capita black youth placement in detention facilities at

**862 per 100,000 — nearly 1 in 100**

For white youth, Pennsylvania ranked **23<sup>rd</sup>** at **93 per 100,000, or less than 1 in 1,000**

### PITTSBURGH

From 2016–2019, **2,322 youths** aged 10 to 17 were arrested in the Pittsburgh City limits, representing **7.1%** of the total 32,864 arrests made.

Of those aged 10 to 17 arrests, **83.5%** were black indicating that black youth are **2.7 times** more likely to be subject to arrest than all other races

**Black females represented 1 in 4 of all arrests made in Pittsburgh during this time period.**

For youths age 15 to 17, arrests were more likely to occur in the **Perry North, Beechview, and Carrick neighborhoods** as nearly one in three 15 and 16 years olds arrested in Pittsburgh were arrested in these neighborhoods.

The Perry North neighborhood’s minority population is estimated to be **36.3%**.

# WHERE YOUTH ARE ENTERING THE SYSTEM

**Much of the education system is essentially funneling youth out of schools and into the juvenile justice system.**

Five themes are driving the growing strength of this trend. Any effort to improve the outcomes of the juvenile justice system has to contend with this issue.

The primary issue is failing schools in general. There are thousands of schools that are unable to provide even essential services like textbooks and well-trained teachers, which is why disengagement and dropout rates are high and climbing. Being unable to provide secondary support services, such as counseling, and make connections to community based organizations for activities like mentoring and other extracurriculars, also contribute to disengagement for many students whose context and trauma may lead to system involvement.

Zero tolerance policies have become a common part of student life (Juvenile Justice Information Exchange, n.d.). These policies criminalize behavior that can be handled in the school. They also disproportionately impact students of color including those with disabilities.

In 2016, the Joint State Government Commission in Pennsylvania issued recommendations on Zero Tolerance School Discipline Policies in the Commonwealth. Although “Zero tolerance” school discipline policies, in their purest form, do not exist in the laws of Pennsylvania, school districts across the state have the latitude to enforce varying levels of punishment for a range of behaviors. What is deemed punishable heavily relies on an “individual administrator’s attitude and philosophy toward school discipline. Similarly, the definition of offenses that can result in expulsion and out-of-school suspension vary widely from

school district to school district and are frequently applied subjectively” (Advisory Committee on Zero Tolerance School Discipline Policies, 2016).

Because schools become incentivized to push out underperforming students, these policies lead to schools bypassing or ignoring due process. It also leads to a rise in police officers taking the place of teachers and administrators in handling disciplinary issues (Advisory Committee on Zero Tolerance School Discipline Policies, 2016).

“Much of the problem with the overuse of suspensions—particularly as it pertains to racial disparities in discipline—rests in their usage in response to more low-level, and typically more subjective rules infractions such as willful defiance, dress code violations, or—ironically—attendance issues (Education Law Center, 2013). These less-severe infractions tend to comprise the majority of all suspensions in schools. In 2015–2016, nearly 70% of suspensions in Allegheny County were for issues related to ‘conduct,’ and not more severe violations like violence, drugs, or weapons” Huguley, et. al., 2018).

Rather than react away from these factors that are driving more students into criminal courts, more elements and behaviors have emerged to encourage it further. Disciplinary alternative schools are a clear example of this. These organizations have little oversight or accountability. They either lead to the student entering the criminal justice system or returning to the conventional education system even less prepared for success than they were before.

The justice system is failing to provide youth with lawyers in 80% of cases. Students are being punished severely for low-level offenses, and they live as students under probation. This probation can be violated for something as minor as missing class or disobeying a teacher. When they end up in a detention facility, there are rarely education resources available. If they do make it back to the conventional school system, there are minimal resources to help them reacclimate.

In Allegheny County alone, when compared to their white counterparts, black male youths are 3.75 times more likely to be arrested on charges of robbery, 5.35 times more likely to be arrested for motor vehicle theft, and 9.3 times more likely for possession of or receiving stolen property.

What makes this situation more tragic is that students with disabilities, students of color, and students from poverty are overrepresented in this system. They are driven into it by an education system that treats them as criminals for minimal infractions, and once they are in the justice system, it's almost impossible to get out and too often leads to involvement in the adult criminal justice system.



# THE FUNNEL INTO THE SYSTEM

## YOUTH



Youth, beginning in elementary school are interacting with environments that aren't supportive of their trajectory.

## SCHOOL



- Lack of differential education
- Few behavioral health supports
- Little community coordination
- Increased presence of police officers
- Utilizing probation officers

## MISCONDUCT



- Disorderly conduct
- Fighting

## REFERRAL



- Suspension
- Arrest
- School handles in-house

## JPO



- Placement
- Electronic home monitoring
- Restitution

# DESPITE DISPARITIES, COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS ARE MAKING AN IMPACT

---

The efforts of the state have been buttressed locally by inspiring work from a multitude of local organizations and community people. These groups are attempting to improve how the justice system understands youth and are working to develop a collective impact approach, convening a multitude of stakeholders to understand the data and determine appropriate solutions.

## **Examples of these groups include:**

- The Black Girls Equity Alliance (BGEA), launched from a summit hosted by Gwen's Girls, has a juvenile justice working group dedicated to improving collaboration with law enforcement, partnering with local diversion programs, and overall reducing referral rates.
- Similarly, the One Northside Safety Committee has seen success with their nascent effort to reduce youth's likelihood to commit another offense. They have bridged gaps between law enforcement, public housing administrators, school officials, and more. These are definite improvements that achieve many of the attributes that should be considered when designing more effective systems in this area, including a community-based approach, a clear understanding of environmental factors, and providing tools to help youth navigate the judicial system and human services.
- Local grassroots programs like 1Nation Mentoring and Cultivating Resilient Youth have shared that they have great relationships with their school probation officers and work with them consistently to help divert youth from the system. Other organizations mentioned by stakeholders are listed in the Appendix.
- Similarly, the Pittsburgh Foundation has launched a pilot project targeting juvenile justice reforms as part of their "100 Percent

Pittsburgh" mission. This pilot project was initiated with a research 2016 report titled "A Qualitative Study of Youth and the Juvenile Justice System" and seeks to encourage reform of the way minority youth in particular are interacting with the justice system. The project's goals include identifying strategies for gathering and sharing data around youth issues, amplifying youth voices in the process, and collaborating with service providers to operationalize this information. They have revealed "the importance of respectfully listening and learning from youth to understand the circumstances and factors affecting the quality of their lives." They have discovered stories that reveal harrowing challenges minority youth face that prevent them from being able to live in a way where they don't fall victim to a justice system that does not consider their unique circumstances nor treat them in the same manner as their white counterparts. These practices lead to downward spirals that the system struggles to perceive, let alone prevent or correct.

The form these efforts take must be collaborative and multi-faceted. Stakeholders expressed that more community-driven alternatives to traditional justice system facilities like detention centers are needed. Some shared that developing new training for justice system personnel to give them a better understanding of the context in which they interact when detaining, charging, and prosecuting youth offenders would be helpful. Others shared that the change needed is in developing broader and more consistent relationships with communities, parents, schools, and the youth themselves to reduce rates of re-offending and to improve RED.



# METHODOLOGY

---

As part of the effort to provide a comprehensive overview of the environment in and around the juvenile justice system in Allegheny County, a survey was conducted consisting of community members, advocates, and other pertinent stakeholders. A small steering committee represented by Allegheny County Juvenile, Amachi Pittsburgh, and the Pittsburgh Foundation recommended a number of individuals and devised a number of questions for exploration.

**In total, 108 individuals, including 20 youth and 3 parents, were engaged in this process via interviews, focus groups, and electronic surveys.**

A survey was also sent out to a number of recommended stakeholders including those who attended the original convening in 2018; however, only 11 people responded. **Participants were asked to respond to the following:**

- What are the coalitions and agencies that exist to support Juvenile Justice prevention efforts in Allegheny County?

- Who are the current advocates and agencies working in this space?
- What specific efforts and activities do you think have worked well over the past few years in Allegheny County? What is NOT working or preventing current efforts from being impactful?
- Which national examples (if any) should we be referencing/including?
- What relevant data can you add to this effort that your organization has collected?
- Are there stakeholders that have conflicting views or priorities to your organization's priorities? (different approaches to how you see it)
- What are the underlying issues in the communities that lead to the disparities that we should be addressing via a collective impact approach? What would move the needle for you? (What opportunity do we have moving forward to move the needle?)

# THEMES OF RESEARCH

---

**Given this history of juvenile justice efforts nationally and state-wide, one must then review what the research has revealed about how the local system operates.**

Below is a list of themes that were identified from this research and discussion of what is and is not working. Connected to the themes are national and local case studies that highlight how organizations are implementing the identified themes. Those corresponding case studies can be found in the appendix. We believe these organizations should be recognized, emulated, and in some cases, elevated as promising practices in any juvenile justice delinquency and prevention efforts moving forward. The presence

of these organizations also highlight that now is an excellent time to develop and execute a broad-based collective impact approach that can shape juvenile justice throughout the state and serve as a model for the country.

**The research demonstrates that there is strong untapped momentum.**

# REFERRALS FROM SCHOOLS

**There have been a number of local efforts that have pointed to the education system as the largest driver of referrals to the juvenile system.**

There was an overall sense that the local education system criminalizes youth and reduces opportunities for parents to engage or even understand what is happening with their children.

- Stakeholders commented on the prevalence of armed guards in schools and said, “they treat youth of color, especially black girls, differently. These youth are expected to be more ‘mature’ and are treated more aggressively. Kids are exposed to this and don’t have counseling support to deal with this trauma.”
- Pittsburgh Public Schools was mentioned as the biggest driver of youth into the juvenile justice system, particularly students with special education needs. In many cases, teachers have the discretion to refer youth (and press charges).
- A couple of school-based organizations shared that they have a great relationship with their school probation officers and that probation officers, before furthering a youth’s involvement into the system, will work with the organizations to divert youth’s behavior. An interviewee shared, “[A]t my school, the probation officers work really hard to try and understand the students. They refer to my program and I give them a bit more context about the student’s situation. Students can then do community service with my organization.”

**Woodland Hills School District** was repeatedly cited as a model communities-in-school initiative. Through a student needs-based approach, referrals from Woodland Hills to Juvenile Probation were reduced by 60% between 2017 and 2018.

- Stakeholders shared that suspension procedures were inconsistent and not effective. In many cases, students are held in school (detained) in unutilized spaces with nothing to do all day.
- Many surveyed felt that school environments are lacking culturally competent teachers and educators who understand the neighborhood environments (and contexts) of their students.
- Respondents acknowledged the tension between the need for the correction of youth behavior versus punishment.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

The general feedback indicates the education system as the biggest source of referrals to the juvenile system. There's an overall sense that the education system overcriminalized youth and limited engagement opportunities for parents to be part of the children's adjudication process. Furthermore, systemic prejudice within the school system, ineffective suspension procedures, and a lack of culturally competent educators have produced an increase in referrals.

### **In an effort to reduce referrals into the system, stakeholders suggest:**

Addressing trauma-related psychological problems emanating from experiencing racism, bias and structural prejudice within educational institutions by providing strong academic and behavioral support through a team of counselors and culturally competent educators who are well-trained to teach students from diverse cultures and neighborhoods.

### **In order to re-examine suspension procedures, stakeholders recommended placing a greater focus on correction rather than punishment. This can be achieved through:**

- Increasing capacity to understand the differentiated needs of learners, inclusive of those with disabilities, and provide appropriate resources and support for educators to do so.
- Reducing the amount of discretion that teachers have to call police officers by creating clear protocols that involve the school addressing the issues and exhausting every possible in-school resource available.
- Creating collaborative teams in the schools between grassroots mentoring organizations and other community partners that work with students, and school probation personnel in order to facilitate better decision-making about youth referrals.

*See appendix for Woodland Hills School District, Pennsylvania's Joint State Government Commission: Ending Punitive Punishment in Schools, Truancy Prevention Program, Truancy Case Managers, Focus on Attendance case studies, pages 32–38.*

# POLICE

**Overall, there is a general perception that, however well-intentioned, police in and out of the school system are operating with a limited understanding of the context for the juveniles they interact with, and often end up treating them like adults.**

This is partially motivated by racial perceptions, and when combined with other race-based decision making, can be particularly damaging. Solving this will require greater coordination with law enforcement to improve their ability to work responsibly with, rather than against, youth populations.

- Youth and police interactions in the moment are abrupt and focused on an immediate issue, thus preventing the opportunity for understanding and connection.

One-time, crisis-centered encounters between cops and kids are “not enough to combat the racial profiling and mischaracterizations of youth behaviors” replied one focus group participant.

- Stakeholders feel that police know very little about youth of color.
- Changing police and probation officers’ attitudes towards youth without support systems came up often as well.
- Police want to be able to help coordinate with community based providers, but feel that they don’t have enough information about where to refer kids.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

To rebuild trust between police and youth, especially those of color, the education and juvenile justice system must work together to foster an environment with meaningful, enriching

relationships. **Positive interactions between youth and law enforcement officers that focus on the person rather than a behavior must be encouraged through:**

- Events such as police-youth chats that can set the stage for relationship building and help both parties replace misunderstandings and disconnect with meaningful connection built on mutual respect.
- Routine training from the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement (NOBLE), as the agency has worked with Allegheny County police in the past. This would improve police-youth interactions. The Pennsylvania RED Youth-Law Enforcement curriculum is an additional, strong tool in this area.

To prevent additional arrests of juveniles, police officers expressed a willingness to connect youth with community resources tailored to their individual needs. In order for this to be successful, there must be coordination between law enforcement, the education system, and community service providers by:

- Police officers participating in additional community meetings and community events to learn more about youth and their community, and becoming familiar with community based providers to better assess where to refer youths.
- Police departments of multiple jurisdictions meeting regularly to collaborate and share information pertaining to what is happening with youth in their jurisdictions.

*See appendix for Social Justice Partnership (SJP), Hope Diversion Program, Youth Law Enforcement Forum case studies, pages 39–41.*

# COORDINATING MULTIPLE EFFORTS

**According to the research, many stakeholders felt that there was a greater need to communicate and share broadly the efforts underway to affect youth vulnerable to the juvenile justice system.**

A number of organizations that support youth in this process--organizations that have the resources to help with interrupting the pipeline into the system, and supporting youth throughout adjudication processes--were recommended. It was stated that increased communication and coordination of services could impact racial and ethnic disparities.

- Students struggle with meeting basic needs as well as a host of other issues. "Different communities need different types of resources," replied one focus group participant. More conversations on these various needs of students among community based providers would be helpful in order to facilitate information sharing and coordination.

**"There's no centralized place where this information is stored. This also prohibits us from following up as appropriate."**

- There is not enough education within the nonprofit community about the issues.
- There is a lack of roundtables that specifically focus on juvenile justice broadly and convene all of the relevant stakeholders.

**"Certain contexts create supportive environments where youth can thrive and not enter the justice system. There are organizations that are doing that work. Perhaps, we need to replicate what those organizations are doing."**

- Not having all of the players at the table making decisions together leads to disproportionality. It was stated that there is "...too much decision making going on at higher levels disconnected from community and context."

## RECOMMENDATIONS

In promoting coordination of efforts, the various stakeholders involved should deepen partnerships in order to prevent youth involvement in the justice system as well as reduce the associated racial and ethnic disparities. This can be achieved by convening roundtables to coordinate information-sharing among providers with educational institutions and juvenile justice stakeholders,

including law enforcement, prosecution, and defense attorneys. It is imperative to focus on existing data while collecting better data to address the systemic issues.

**Stakeholders recommended furthering the collaborative efforts that have been facilitated by the Black Girls Equity Alliance including:**

- Assessing various resource needs for different communities
- Facilitating partnerships between schools and community based organizations
- Developing metrics to support a collective impact strategy
- Including Latino advocacy groups and other immigrant communities, who say there is not enough support for them
- Discerning the issues faced by non-profit organizations when addressing this issues.

In order to foster meaningful connections to support youth in crisis, intentional connections need to be made to organizations that have a history of working with youth with lived experience in the criminal justice system.

**Research-based mentoring programs that are in communities should be explored to interrupt the school to prison pipeline.**

*See appendix for Black Girls Equity Alliance, Amachi Pittsburgh case studies, pages 42–43.*



# COURT/PROBATION ACTIONS

**The Court system has been implementing policies and passing down judgements that are often confusing or even counterproductive to communities and other actors in the juvenile justice system.**

Greater coordination between judges and the community at large is recommended.

- The 2009 Interbranch Commission on Juvenile Justice in Pennsylvania recommended increasing attorneys' *Continuing Legal Education* ethics requirements.
- Interviewees say more collaboration between the courts needs to occur to ensure that education is made available at all levels of the courts to "understand how nuanced the issues can be."

"There is a tendency among magistrates to hand out different sentences for different youth who have committed the same offenses. The magistrates and judges must be engaged in this process in order for other stakeholders to better understand their rationale, as the police are not the ones to decide where youth are placed."

- Additional communication is needed between the public defender's office and juvenile courts. Some of the feedback shared indicated that adjudicated youth do not have educational advocates. However, both the public defender's office and the district attorney's office shared their connections with the educational system and a number of liaisons within education. Additional coordination could help with information sharing and better supporting youth.
- Additionally, respondents felt that there was an overuse of prescribing electronic home monitoring as a punishment.
- There was a general consensus that judges are ordering restitution unnecessarily.
- Tools for achieving objective and consistent charges and processing were raised as an issue. The Youth Level Survey (YLS) and PaDRAI system are intended to remove bias from the adjudication process, however, there are issues with implementation.
- Stakeholders feel that there is a willingness to use tools that are meant to be objective and that help with screening youth.
- Respondents have noted that there is more awareness of these tools, and more openness about discussing their strengths and weaknesses, which is an improvement.

- The Detention Risk Assessment tool is widely used to determine a youth's offense level and connect that with a corresponding charge. However, respondents stated that the charge can often be overridden, negating the need for the tool.
- The Youth Level of Service is an assessment currently being employed by the courts. However, it was reported that Probation is using the assessment, but it isn't being implemented with fidelity.
- "Allegheny County Family Court and Juvenile Court — top down from administration to probation — there is an openness to the idea that the system does not work in some ways and that those ways need to be addressed; a willingness to confront some hard truths and question what is being done. It has fueled efforts to become a model court and explore ways to improve things. It's driven by good data collection — what/how are we measuring."
- Respondents felt that probation regularly closes cases during the pre-hearing conference in an effort to reduce the amount of time that lapses between when an incident occurs and when the youth is charged. A number of respondents shared that much of the "power"—regarding what youth are being charged with—resides with probation.

"Mental Health and Behavioral Health are not a driver of recidivism,' says probation. "And that is wrong."

## RECOMMENDATIONS

To cultivate a court and education system that operates on uniformed, unbiased, developmentally appropriate disciplinary frameworks, there needs to be increased transparency and information sharing between inter-courts, inter-stakeholders (such as the judges and magistrates), and between the court and the education system. This will assist in highlighting nuances in cases and in enforcing policies that work for youth and their families.

### This recommendation may be achieved through:

- Greater coordination between those who represent children and the schools children attend.
- Public defenders attending school meetings and making connections with the school on the child's behalf. Additionally, it was suggested the Public Defender's Office and the district attorneys receive training around educational advocacy.
- Additional Training: The expansion of attorneys' *Continuing Legal Education* ethics requirements to involve additional information on current trends in youth development, particularly those with adverse traumatic experiences. Additional training should also include judges because there was a general sense that they were ordering unnecessary restitution.
- To become a model court, continuous efforts should be made to refine the system based on data.

One finding in this research highlighted an incongruence in sentences rendered to different youths charged for the same offense. Procedural justice should be the goal. **To produce fairness and consistency in processing, the Courts should improve a number of norms in probation such as:**

- Probation should utilize the tools such as YLS and PaDRAI consistently to ensure the youth's sentences correspond to their charges.
- Magistrate and judges must work together to ensure sentences are consistently congruent with the crime.
- Probation holds a significant power in deciding how youths are charged. It should deprioritize closing cases quickly and prioritize case investigations.
- Determining a set of decisions that can be made by a committee instead just by probation in an effort

*See appendix for Interbranch Commission on Juvenile Justice, How The Pierce County Juvenile Court is Changing the Narrative, Crossover Youth Practice Model (CYPM) case studies, pages 44–48.*

# PLACEMENT

**Placement numbers are down in the juvenile system according to the research. However, the placement options are also limited.**

There are a number of youth offenders being held in adult facilities, or being held in various out of home placements when community options haven't been explored. This also limits the ability for the community to participate in the process of supporting juvenile offenders in their journey throughout the various parts of the system.

- There are limited options for placement of adjudicated youth, especially young girls. There were a number of programs that existed before, but very limited options for placement are available.

“Successful community based programs that are approved by probation don't exist.”

- Stakeholders shared that the number of youth that are being placed in residential facilities are for mostly technical violations of probation. Additionally, there is a belief that those who are in placement are there specifically because they have failed to adjust to the only approved community based program, CISP.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The juvenile justice system is riddled with racial disparities, overcriminalization, pretrial detention, and many other processes that contribute to youth recidivating. Most juveniles are held in correctional style facilities, sometimes with adults. The facilities youths are placed in impacts their well-being, access to resources, and reentry outcomes. Being confined in facilities with punitive, dehumanizing conditions also jeopardizes their chances at positive life outcomes. Efforts need to be made to expand placement options for juvenile offenders, and to ensure the community has an opportunity to help them successfully reintegrate back into society to prevent recidivism.

**In order to improve outcomes for youth, especially females, who are sentenced to placement, probation should increase options through:**

- Expanding opportunities for girls to participate in alternatives to placement by developing a program similar to the CISP program for males.
- Reconsidering educational curriculum providers during placement.

**In an effort to increase the community's participation in aiding juvenile offenders achieve positive life outcomes, we recommend:**

- Expanding community alternatives to placement beyond the CISP program.

*See appendix for FSG: Reimagining Social Change, Community Intensive Supervision Program (CISP) case studies, pages 49–51.*



# COMMUNITY INCLUSION

## Stakeholders suggested that school and the courts are not supportive of parents and caregivers in children's lives.

The general perception is that the juvenile justice system does not make it easy for parents to stay connected or involved with their journey through the adjudication process. In addition to the inclusion of parents, it was shared that youth are sometimes left in the dark about the court processes. Overall, there is a need to share more information with the greater community about the system and issues to prevent the associated racial and ethnic disparities.

“[Parents] can't go to the meetings because they don't have interpre[ters], which schools are supposed to provide but often don't.”

- Oftentimes, parents are unable to attend their child's court appointments because of work and other life commitments, leaving the child by themselves: “[...] because of other life obligations, taking time off from work may also mean losing their job, and there isn't another responsible adult available to sit with the child in court.”
  - Some respondents believe that youth don't know their legal rights or understand the juvenile justice system at all. There is some work happening within the community and in the Public Defender's office where legal experts explain students' legal rights to them.
  - The public is generally unaware of the issues, including racial and ethnic disparities. Respondents shared that the juvenile court proceedings are closed to the public and much of the decision making is left to the judges. There is also a general feeling that even in appeal proceedings, the appellate courts defer to the juvenile court judges.
- Parents are often unaware of what is happening in the school or with their child. This especially presents an issue when language is a barrier.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The role of parents and caregivers as recipients or managers of services when their child is part of the system is crucial in producing positive outcomes in a child's education and mental well-being. Efforts at developing and implementing systematic opportunities to include the greater community and youth themselves into the process of adjudication need to happen to sustain support for youth during this process. Furthermore, efforts need to be made to educate the youth about their rights and share with the general public issues related to racial and ethnic disparities.

In order to decriminalize the local education system, schools and courts must expand communication and engagement opportunities for parents and caregivers to stay informed about what is happening with their children. **This recommendation may be achieved by providing:**

- Daily opportunities and formats for children and parents and caregivers to communicate via phone, internet, or another virtual platform
- Opportunities for parents to shadow their children
- Inviting parents and caregivers to volunteer in school activities

**In an effort to increase the public's awareness of these issues:**

- Juvenile court proceedings should be open to the general public to increase transparency and accountability in the courts.
- Stakeholders should ensure that all youth are aware of their rights. Efforts need to be made by programs and key personnel within the system to educate youths about laws of which they are unaware. There is some work happening in the public defender's office in this regard. This will help ensure youth aren't left in the dark about the adjudication process.
- Advocates should develop an accountability campaign directed at the decisions of the Magisterial District Judges. Advocates and stakeholders should develop a public scorecard for different magisterial districts which showcases the judgements made by individual district judges. The scorecard could be used as a tool to advocate for additional change.

**“Residents should be able to provide regular feedback on issues that are important to them.”**

*See appendix for Pittsburgh Foundation's Juvenile Justice Pilot, Operation Youth Success: Allowing Communities to Have Agency case studies, pages 52–55.*





# CONCLUSION

---

**Reviewing the work of these case studies and existing organizations reveals that there are clear benefits to enacting community-driven efforts that bridge communication and information gaps between all stakeholders.**

This especially includes groups of stakeholders that have traditionally not had a voice in the process—including the parents and the youth themselves. From the community perspective, there are important changes that need to happen prior to a youth becoming involved in the juvenile justice system and at each stage of the process for those who do become involved in the system. School leaders need to communicate with parents and community-based providers; public defenders must interact more with judges; judges need additional training to understand youth development; and probation has to take a more community-based approach to sentencing.

Data needs to play a larger role in the state's efforts, and should play a larger role in guiding how organizations collaborate. Information sharing should be a required practice for groups and institutions when they partner to address problems. This would also improve communication overall, and would increase pressure for organizations to have more current and accurate

data. This would likely lead to increased and improved communications with communities.

In Allegheny County, there is more openness to the ideas raised in this report along with a growing level of awareness and concern about what is not working. Many stakeholders appear eager to discuss hard truths about how youth of color are treated prior to, during and after involvement in the juvenile justice system; the current outcomes of the justice system; and how they are not serving the interests of the system or the community.

When everyone's voices are heard, organizations and people are able to develop thoughtful strategies that incorporate a compassionate understanding of each individual's context, and better outcomes are achieved for affected youth, all stakeholders and the system overall. Improving racial equity and justice needs to focus on gathering more of the players in this field more frequently. With community boards collaborating with law enforcement, it is possible to develop more effective strategies to avert the

school to prison pipeline and reduce racial and ethnic disparities: providing adequate support and resources to keep youth in schools and at home as the primary goal; avoiding unnecessary interactions with law enforcement; and instituting alternative solutions that decriminalize youth of color; and creating a justice system that is truly a system of corrections, not just punitive responses for youth offenders.

Bridging gaps, greater transparency, and larger collaborative efforts will be more impactful, but they will also be harder to execute and implement. Even with current efforts in Allegheny County alone, momentum has had fits and starts over time. Enacting change on a state level will only take longer and be more complicated. Solving this problem will require designating a backbone entity, an organization whose role it is to convene stakeholders, help prioritize issues, monitor data and progress, reduce duplication, and connect the silos of activity.

Research, testimonials, and experience point to the Gwendolyn J Elliot Institute as a clear candidate for assuming this position. This organization is primed to guide the work of a Juvenile Justice Collective Impact Strategy. All of the relevant players are

Establishing the Gwendolyn J. Elliot Institute as a backbone entity will be a major step towards creating a sustainable collective impact approach.

already a part of the conversation and have participated in some level of collaboration. The Institute is a trusted leader based on the feedback from the research.

Collective impact approaches benefit from powerful central principles. The larger community creates a common agenda with clearly defined metrics for success. This requires a detailed understanding of the current situation and

analysis of what is and isn't working. The process of continuing collaborative efforts on an ongoing basis is intentional and coordinated while leading to impacts that are mutually reinforcing. It also compels more communication between the different parties. Ultimately, the collective impact approach is expected to not only prevent youth delinquency and involvement in the juvenile justice system but also to reduce racial and ethnic disparities that have persisted even in the wake of reductions in placements.

There are some early signs of effectiveness in the work being carried out so far. The effort to bring down the detention population by probation, in general, is real and shows in reduced referral rates. When asked, most juvenile judges claim they are actively trying not to send kids to placement. Throughout the research, and this report, a clear desire was heard that everyone wants a justice system that actually penalizes people who deserve it, not one that thoughtlessly processes all offenders the same way. This effort has also been abetted by excellent support on the part of Allegheny County public defenders who are actively engaging with and supporting many of these efforts.

Stakeholders have the ability to understand the issues challenging current efforts as well as identify successful new initiatives that can improve upon this work due to the presence and work of a number of local organizations. Several have already outlined the gaps in the system's current approaches and are creating and advancing grassroots efforts to make substantive progress. There is general consensus that further focus should be on follow-through, not more research, and people are ready to move forward with urgency. The next evolution of addressing the vulnerability of youth of color to the school to prison pipeline in the greater Pittsburgh region and in the state should focus on better understanding the work that is already underway and acknowledged in this report. Organizations that are doing this work must be convened consistently to create common goals and metrics to move a collective strategy forward. Resources should be driven to support and expand the strategies identified for lasting change.

# APPENDIX

---

## CASE STUDIES

- 32** Woodland Hills School District
- 34** Pennsylvania's Joint State Government Commission: Ending Punitive Punishment in Schools
- 36** Truancy Prevention Program
- 37** Truancy Case Managers
- 38** Focus on Attendance
- 39** School-Justice Partnership (SJP)
- 40** The Hope Diversion Program
- 41** Youth Law Enforcement Forum
- 42** Black Girls Equity Alliance
- 43** Amachi Pittsburgh
- 44** Interbranch Commission on Juvenile Justice
- 46** How The Pierce County Juvenile Court is Changing the Narrative
- 48** Crossover Youth Practice Model (CYPM)
- 49** FSG: Reimagining Social Change
- 51** Community Intensive Supervision Program (CISP)
- 52** The Pittsburgh Foundation's Juvenile Justice Pilot
- 54** Operation Youth Success: Allowing Communities to Have Agency
  
- 56** Organizations mentioned throughout the research

# CASE STUDY: WOODLAND HILLS SCHOOL DISTRICT

In 2016–2017, the University of Pittsburgh’s Center on Race and Social Problems - in partnership with Pitt’s Motivation Center and Woodland Hills School District, and with support from The Heinz Endowments - collaborated with Woodland Hills Intermediate School to implement the Just Discipline Project. Designed to support positive school climates and restorative discipline practices, the program began in fall 2017.

**Over time, there have been substantial gains on discipline indicators. Notably, the following were reported:**

- 28% fewer individual students were suspended;
- Suspensions decreased by 22%;
- Total student referrals decreased by 30%;
- 20% fewer individual students were referred

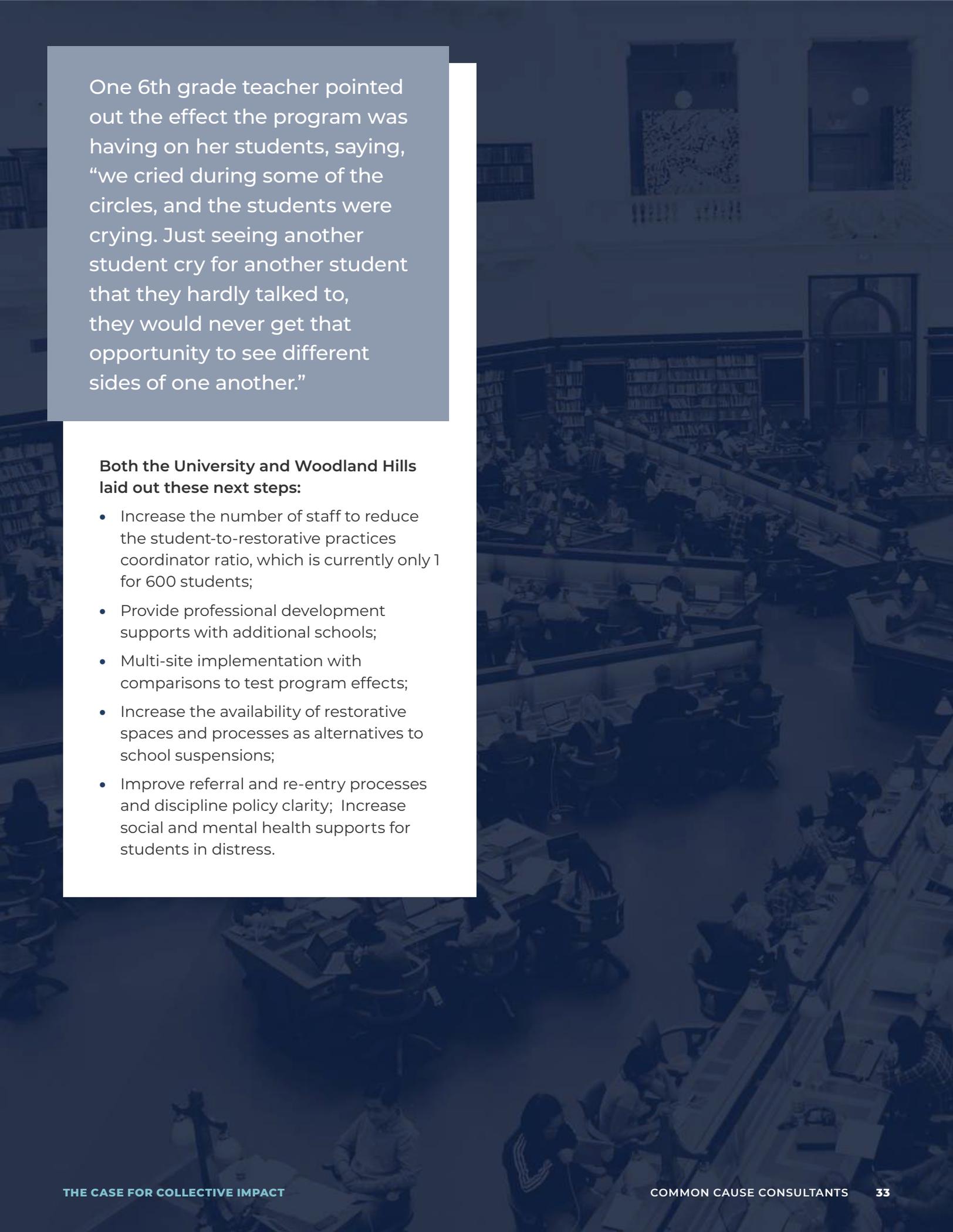
Aside from fewer suspensions, Woodland Hills Intermediate has also experienced improved academic performance in Math, Language Arts, and Science. Two of these increases actually reversed downward trends.

Through interviews and surveys, teachers and staff had an opportunity to give feedback on the program’s implementation. Of its strengths, they said the following:

- 91% of teachers would like restorative practices to continue
- The restorative practice coordinator is an asset, building relationships with the students and resolving issues;
- Community circles were widely used and have a strong effect;
- Co-planning and co-facilitation of circles by faculty pairs works well;
- Student leaders are very successful at engaging their peers and at helping to defuse conflicts.

**Of the program’s challenges, they shared that:**

- Restorative practices don’t fix everything: teachers felt that 2018–2019 was still an especially difficult year for students;
- Clearer and more consistent school-wide discipline policies are needed beyond restorative practices;
- Resources for student services and holistic supports are far too limited;
- School-wide activities have potential, but at times need to be more engaging;
- More space and staff supports are needed to provide additional alternatives to out-of-school suspensions.



One 6th grade teacher pointed out the effect the program was having on her students, saying, “we cried during some of the circles, and the students were crying. Just seeing another student cry for another student that they hardly talked to, they would never get that opportunity to see different sides of one another.”

**Both the University and Woodland Hills laid out these next steps:**

- Increase the number of staff to reduce the student-to-restorative practices coordinator ratio, which is currently only 1 for 600 students;
- Provide professional development supports with additional schools;
- Multi-site implementation with comparisons to test program effects;
- Increase the availability of restorative spaces and processes as alternatives to school suspensions;
- Improve referral and re-entry processes and discipline policy clarity; Increase social and mental health supports for students in distress.

# CASE STUDY:

## PENNSYLVANIA'S JOINT STATE GOVERNMENT COMMISSION: ENDING PUNITIVE PUNISHMENT IN SCHOOLS

Pennsylvania's education system has a severe problem: the rates of expulsion and out-of-school suspension in Pennsylvania is higher than the national average. Studies have shown that extremely punitive discipline policies for misbehavior can result in long-term negative consequences for students who are young and socioeconomically marginalized. These policies require careful scrutiny because if they aren't created mindfully, they can lead students straight into the School to Prison Pipeline.

Pennsylvania's Joint State Government Commission, which is the research service for the state legislature, released a report titled *Discipline Policies in Pennsylvania's Public Schools* in 2016. The commission did a comprehensive review of school discipline policies, state laws and regulations, and the relationship between law enforcement and school districts. The focus of this report was on the effects of discipline on students with disabilities and students under 12 years of age. The commission also made recommendations for policy and legislative reform.

### RESULTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The report found that Pennsylvania ranked 20th in the nation regarding the percent of school suspensions and 13th in the nation regarding the percent of school expulsions. With that information in mind, the commission made these recommendations:

- Schools should minimize the use of exclusionary discipline and law enforcement intervention and move toward a system of evidence-based or research-based alternatives.
- School systems should emphasize that expulsion and out-of-school suspension are reserved for only the most serious of offenses (when the student's misbehavior is of a violent or sexual nature that endangers others).
- School systems should provide services to return children to the classroom as soon as possible when they are expelled or suspended.
- Schools should only use pull-out discipline programs (known as "alternative education for disruptive youth") if absolutely necessary and only for the most disruptive students.
- Schools should remove "disregard for school authority, including persistent violation of school policy" from their definitions of "disruptive" because the phrase is too vague and subjective.
- The Pennsylvania Department of Education should increase its monitoring of discipline data and, where problems are identified, require districts in question to establish
- Disciplinary Policy Review Committees. These committees would have 50% of their membership be "parents and advocates who are representative of the population subject to disciplinary exclusions and law enforcement referrals."

- Pennsylvania should adjust the funding for state school safety grants so that a smaller portion of funds goes to funding School Resource Officers and a more significant portion supports other programs that reduce the use of exclusionary discipline.

The adoption of zero-tolerance approaches have created a dramatic rise in the use of out-of-school suspensions for non-emergent offenses such as dress code violations, tardiness, and hosts of other infractions not involving weapons and not resulting in significant injury. This “culture of zero tolerance” accounts for much of the racial disparity and the overall high suspension rates in many districts.

To give our most marginalized children the greatest shot at receiving an excellent education, we must broaden the definition of “zero tolerance” and encourage school systems to operate on restorative models of discipline.

# CASE STUDY:

## TRUANCY PREVENTION PROGRAM

Between July 2011 through January 2013, Allegheny County Department of Human Services assessed effectiveness of services provided and outcomes achieved by two Allegheny County truancy prevention program providers serving more than 400 students total.

Provider A worked with students for an average of 85 hours, compared to 54 hours by Provider B. The average time between referral and first contact, either direct or indirect, was only five days for Provider B, compared to 35 days for Provider A. On average, 27 percent of students improved attendance pre-involvement to involvement. During the 2011–2012 school year, students participating in truancy intervention services missed fewer days post-intervention (six days) than pre-intervention (eight days). Twelve percent of the students served (49) were re-referred to the program from July 2011 through January 2013 (16 percent of Provider A's students and eight percent of Provider B's).

To gain insights into stakeholders' perceptions of the issues and challenges faced in preventing truancy and excessive absenteeism, interviews were conducted with judges, school social workers, child welfare staff, and staff from Allegheny Intermediate Unit's Truancy Prevention Program (TPP). Responses were categorized into challenges facing the caregiver, the child, and the family. Primary challenges faced by caregivers included mental health, medical, and substance abuse issues. Children faced anxiety and hygiene issues, as well as gangs, school bullying, and responsibilities at home for younger siblings and other family members. Family challenges included transportation, lack of engagement on the part of parents, and economic challenges, such as unstable housing or lack of funds for appropriate school clothing.

When asked about ways in which they could more effectively address the issue of truancy, school social workers unanimously agreed on the need for additional resources to allow them to employ someone in the school dedicated to attendance, make more home visits, provide incentives for good attendance, and provide in-school services to students and their families.

Magisterial District Judges recommended more consistency on the schools' part, so that the schools would file a complaint with the court for every student reaching a certain number of unexcused absences. When asked about the effectiveness of the interventions employed by the judges, school social workers reported that more consistency and better follow-up communication could improve outcomes. Both the judges and school representatives agreed that judges need better information about each case in order to tailor consequences to the family's particular circumstances.

# CASE STUDY:

## TRUANCY CASE MANAGERS

During the 2017–2018 school year, Truancy Case Managers (TCM) transitioned from the Focus on Attendance and Allegheny Intermediate Unit teams to work more closely with the office of Juvenile Probation.

The TCMs focused on referrals/cases certified from Magisterial District Courts for failure to comply with a lawful sentence imposed for conviction of a summary offense. They also worked with youth assigned to a Juvenile Probation officer whom the school district identified as truant.

The TCMs are responsible for compiling fact sheets on every student, meeting with students, tracking attendance, identifying the root cause of their truancy, and developing a plan to best address the student's needs.

TCMs also have liaison responsibilities and represent the Juvenile Probation Department. They cooperate with the Magisterial District Justices, Focus on Attendance, Allegheny Intermediate Unit, Allegheny County Children Youth and Families, school personnel, and service providers.

At the time of the initial report, this project was less than a year old. As such, statistical information on the project's impact on school attendance was not available.



# CASE STUDY: FOCUS ON ATTENDANCE

The Focus on Attendance pilot program replaced the Truancy Prevention Program beginning in the 2016–2017 school year.

Developed by the Educational Success and Truancy Prevention work group of the Allegheny County Children's Roundtable, Focus on Attendance was created in recognition of the urgent need to address school attendance issues in the community.

Focus on Attendance works with stakeholders to assess the underlying needs of students who are chronically absent or tardy. Focus on Attendance acknowledges the link between poor school attendance and system involvement.

When appropriate, it provides assistance to students and families through an array of services and educational support.

Between 2016 and 2017, Focus on Attendance staff served 1,673 youth. In the first half of the 2017–2018 school year (August to December), they served 820 youth. Services included referrals to truancy prevention programs and resources, and connections to existing human service and probation workers. Additional resource connections were made using poor school attendance as a trigger. Referrals were made by schools, Magisterial District Courts, and call screenings from Allegheny County Children, Youth, and Families.



# CASE STUDY: SCHOOL-JUSTICE PARTNERSHIP (SJP)

Allegheny County assembled a cross-systems, interdisciplinary team to implement a School-Justice Partnership (SJP) locally. The case for support was compelling enough: allegations of school-related offenses (defined as occurring either on school property or within school jurisdiction) increased 30% from 2016 to 2017, with offenses by female students increasing 44% and males 23%.

Under the leadership of Judge Dwayne Woodruff, Allegheny County attended the 2016 School-Justice Partnerships Certificate Program at Georgetown University's Center for Juvenile Justice Reform.

The team developed an SJP initiative rooted in the principles of pre-arrest diversion and behavioral health support.

Later, the SJP team received a technical assistance grant in 2017 that allowed them to work with the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges and the National Center for Juvenile Justice. The intent was to support the SJP's goal of partnering with a local school district. The grant also funded attendance at the School-Justice Partnership Institute in California in May of that year, as well as a site visit to a fully-realized SJP site in Philadelphia in June.

The SJP team continued to collaborate with systems partners in education, law enforcement, and behavioral health as it neared the end of its first Memorandum of Understanding between a school district - Woodland Hills School District - and law enforcement. Since then, the team has met with Pittsburgh Public Schools officials to explore opportunities for a similar partnership.



# CASE STUDY: THE HOPE DIVERSION PROGRAM

The pilot program, which is limited to the North Side and targets people ages 12 to 26, has since July 2017 been facilitated by Foundation of Hope, a nonprofit on West North Avenue. It so far has seen some early success — of 60 youths who've participated, to date only four have committed another offense, program director Jeffrey Williams said.

The program's small-scale but intensive approach requires collaboration between police, prosecutors, judges, nonprofit workers and probation officers, all of whom are working toward the same goal, said Kimberly Booth, Assistant Chief Probation Officer in Allegheny County.

“We don't want kids in the system who don't need to be there,” she said.

Juvenile probation sees around 1,500 cases annually, Ms. Booth estimated, and while probation officers can send kids to a variety of services like drug and alcohol treatment or counseling, it's a piecemeal system with a variety of different providers, locations and personnel. From July 2017 through July 2019, 93 people were referred to the diversion program, according to an internal report, and 60 agreed to participate. The median age for participants is 16, and all but one participant was black. So far, 37 males and 23 females have participated, Mr. Williams said.

Participants most often were referred to the diversion program by Allegheny County Juvenile Probation but also are referred by Pittsburgh police officers, the city's housing authority and Propel Northside, a charter school.

The agencies have referred youths to the program after the teenagers or young adults were charged with theft, drug offenses, assaults, disorderly conduct, trespassing and similar charges like loitering or shoplifting, according to the report.

The program was started with funding and institutional staff support from the Buhl Foundation, Dollar Bank and the Pittsburgh Foundation's Youth Service Investment Fund (Bradbury, 2019).

# CASE STUDY: YOUTH LAW ENFORCEMENT FORUM

In 2003, the Allegheny County Juvenile Probation planned to conduct five minority youth-law enforcement forums. The purpose of the forum was to reduce the number of youth of color who enter the juvenile justice system.

The curriculum used was developed with the support of the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) and the MacArthur Foundation. The purpose of the curriculum was to increase officer safety and reduce arrests for minority youth by improving interaction between minority youth and law enforcement officers on the streets and in the schools of Pennsylvania's cities.

The curriculum has received widespread praise from Pennsylvania's Senate Judiciary Committee and the Federal Advisory Committee on Juvenile Justice, which advises the President and Congress.

The forums were conducted in various communities throughout Allegheny County where a high percentage of police allegations were made for youth of color. They included

several communities under the jurisdiction of the City of Pittsburgh Police, a department which was desirous of having all of their officers participate in the training. While it initially focused on new recruits, their goal was to move forward with training more senior officers.

The first Youth – Law Enforcement forum was held in 2004 followed by five more over the next few years. Every law enforcement officer and most of the youth have found the forums to be extremely beneficial.

The forums have been very effective at reducing barriers between the police and minority youth. The youth learn that their thoughts and ideas are valued and police in turn become aware that youth actions can be interpreted in a positive manner instead of the stereotypical negative perceptions often assumed. The only compensation for the youth is a good breakfast and lunch, and is otherwise voluntary. They need to feel that their involvement is appreciated.

# CASE STUDY: BLACK GIRLS EQUITY ALLIANCE

“Nothing about us, without us” is a guiding principle of Gwen’s Girls’ work.

In 2016, Gwen’s Girls held its first annual Equity Summit, where over 150 local practitioners, community members, and policymakers gathered together to learn about research about Black girls within the community. Data from the report *Inequities Affecting Black Girls in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County* were presented, with discussions about the inequities Black girls were facing throughout numerous systems in the region.

Many attendees expressed an interest in continuing the dialogues after the summit and working to take actionable steps to address the disparities. **In the spring of 2017, the Black Girls Equity Alliance (BGEA) was formed.**

BGEA is comprised of individuals, community-based organizations, universities, and government entities that work with Black girls. BGEA is overseen by the Gwendolyn J. Elliott Institute, an interprofessional research and consultation institute formed to support research, provide training, and serve as a clearinghouse for best practices in research and programming for girls and young women, with an emphasis on the experiences of Black girls. BGEA is divided into four working groups, each one working to address the inequities Black girls experience in their respective systems: Health and Wellness, Child Welfare, Juvenile Justice, and Education.

The purpose of the Juvenile Justice working group is to collaborate with local law enforcement officials to identify communities with the highest referral rates for Black girls, the associated behaviors, and chances to partner with local diversion programs, community members, and policymakers to reduce rates of referral. Through data-sharing agreements

with law enforcement and the judicial system, this workgroup has been able to identify communities with the highest referral rates for Black girls. This information has been used to collaborate with diversion programs, as well as to inform practitioners and elected officials.

Given the findings highlighted through data-sharing, funding was obtained from local community foundations to create a publicly available and searchable database to increase research related to juvenile justice inequities. This new data source, called a data dashboard, has enabled us to pinpoint the neighborhoods from which Black girls are referred and for which offenses. The data particularly highlighted the fact that many referrals of Black girls come from school police and/or what are termed “school-related” offenses. As a result, the Juvenile Justice working group has been meeting with the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police as well as Pittsburgh Public Schools Police to learn more about their interactions with Black girls and their arrests and referrals of Black girls. The working group has also collaborated with the Pittsburgh Bureau of Police’s Crime Analysis Department to gain an understanding of arrest and citation patterns for Black girls in Pittsburgh (Brinkman, et. al., 2019).

# CASE STUDY: AMACHI PITTSBURGH

Amachi Pittsburgh was founded in 2003 to support children with incarcerated parents through one-on-one mentorship, advocacy training, and family programming. Children ages 4–18 are matched with an adult mentor, with whom they meet one-on-one, while high school-aged students have the option to join the Amachi Ambassador program.

Since 2010, Amachi Ambassadors have participated in workshops for ongoing professional development and have advocated for policy change in the criminal justice system.

In Allegheny County, more than 8,500 youth have a parent in jail or prison. Through its programming, Amachi Pittsburgh has effectively disrupted the intergenerational cycle of incarceration. Only 8% of Amachi Pittsburgh alumni became involved in the juvenile system (in comparison to 70%, as estimated by the U.S. Department of Justice). Moreover, the cost of Amachi Pittsburgh programming (about \$2500 per family) is significantly less expensive than the cost of juvenile detention (up to \$200,000 per youth for secured detention) and incarceration (from \$34,000-\$40,000 per adult). There is a clear role for mentoring in juvenile justice prevention.

The organization has served on a number of task forces and committees related to the justice system including co-chairing the Advocacy Subcommittee of the Allegheny County Jail Collaborative and serving on both the Pennsylvania Joint State Commission's Zero Tolerance Advisory Committee and the Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention Committee of PCCD.

The organization's leadership also led to the establishment of the First Chance Act of Pennsylvania, a fund to provide scholarships and program grants to benefit youth "vulnerable to the criminal justice system."

Amachi Pittsburgh's efforts have led to the organization serving as an advocate at both the local and the state level.

# CASE STUDY: INTERBRANCH COMMISSION ON JUVENILE JUSTICE

Following the release of the Pennsylvania Interbranch Commission on Juvenile Justice's (ICJJ) Final Report and Recommendations in May 2010, a juvenile justice task force, Allegheny County Commission on Juvenile Justice, was established to review the report, assess Allegheny County's juvenile justice practices, and make further recommendations to ensure best practices consistent with the ICJJ's recommendations. Members of the task force included representatives from Allegheny County Court, Allegheny County Sheriff's Department, Center for Victims, KidsVoice, National Center for Juvenile Justice, and private defense attorneys.

The task force then began the work of breaking up into smaller subcommittees that addressed a specific component of the ICJJ report.

**A sample of their recommendations are below.**

## **1. Crime Victims**

- A highly organized and concerted effort to educate legislators about funding the Victims of Juvenile Offenders program;
- Adequate training to anyone assuming responsibility of providing rights and services to victims of juvenile offenders;
- Funding sources other than state budget;
- Newly adapted victim notification letters and forms continue to be utilized;
- Education on the forms continues to be a part of annual training;
- Appropriate support and services are available to all victims of juvenile crime.

## **2. Judicial Ethics**

- Hold formal, mandatory training sessions on judicial ethics at regular intervals;
- Forward and circulate ethics decisions and opinions to all judges on a regular basis;

- Advocate for strengthening the reporting, investigation, and existing discipline system for judges

## **3. Continuing Education**

- Require all Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas judges attend a minimum of 12 hours of continuing education each year regarding areas of law in their respective divisions;
- Require all Family Division judges to attend a minimum of 12 hours of continuing education each year regarding the Juvenile Act, child development, and family relationships;
- Require all Juvenile Section hearing officers to attend a minimum of 12 hours of continuing education each year regarding the Juvenile Act, child development, and family relationships;
- Require all Juvenile Section prosecutors and public defenders to be trained in standards adopted by the Pennsylvania District Attorneys Association and the Juvenile Defenders Association.

#### 4. Juvenile Prosecutors

- Adequate resources and funding for ongoing training and continuing legal education;
- Members of the unit should continue to develop and maintain collaborative relationships with all parties involved in the court proceedings;
- The Office of the District Attorney should continue efforts to provide support for effective and efficient operation of the unit by providing adequate resources and staffing;

#### 5. Juvenile Defense Lawyers

- Establish minimum, uniform, mandatory standards for effective representation for juvenile delinquency matters both statewide and in Allegheny County;
- Increase the number of Office of Public Defender juvenile defenders from eleven to nineteen;
- Provide funding for full-time investigators and social service advocates to the Office of Public Defender and Office of Conflict Counsel;
- Increase training opportunities for juvenile defenders, specifically with regards to detention advocacy, litigation and trial skills, disposition planning, post-disposition practice, child welfare, immigration law, educational rights, adolescent development, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender issues

#### 6. Use of Data and Statistics

- Allegheny County Juvenile Probation regularly reviews the statewide Juvenile Delinquency Data Analysis tool to monitor accuracy and integrity at the state level, and see how Allegheny County statistics compare with other jurisdictions across Pennsylvania;

- Allegheny County Juvenile Probation continues to work with Juvenile Court Judges Commission to ensure that data integrity is not compromised when juvenile records are expunged;

Allegheny County Juvenile Probation reviews statistical reports of other similar agencies from around the country to explore possible improvements to its own reporting;

Allegheny County revisits the use of data and statistics at least once per year.

The report concluded that “the ICJJ did not recommend a fundamental overhaul of the established juvenile justice system in Pennsylvania, nor do we believe that is necessary here. Rather, the within recommendations were both informed and inspired by the work of the ICJJ, and provide concrete suggestions to modify, where necessary, strengthen and sustain our practices to promote the principles of balanced and restorative justice to which we subscribe” (Allegheny County Commission on Juvenile Justice, 2012).

# CASE STUDY: HOW THE PIERCE COUNTY JUVENILE COURT IS CHANGING THE NARRATIVE

In a nation where punitive justice has wreaked havoc on youth of color, the paradigm is starting to shift to a model that supports restorative justice and collective impact. Organizations across the United States are coming together to define social justice issues and create a shared vision to solve them. These national programs are positively changing outcomes for those involved with the juvenile justice system.

**The Pierce County Juvenile Court** is one of only two counties in the nation to receive a Probation Transformation grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation. This grant allows probation departments to partner with families and communities to support positive youth development.

This effort includes multiple partners such as families & youth, judges, prosecutors, probation & detention staff, court administrators, University of Washington researchers, and A Common Voice (a local family support organization).

## PURPOSE AND METHODS

The goal of this collective impact process is to increase youth success, build trust and positive relationships between families and the court, ensure racial equity in judicial processes, and, most importantly, prevent youth with minor offenses from coming back to court. The Probation Transformation initiative meets this goal by:

- Introducing Opportunity-Based Probation, which “uses research on teen brain development to motivate youth with goal-oriented rewards and strength-centered community activities” (Pierce County, 2015)
- Utilizing a Youth and Family Team Model that focuses on delivering extra support to youth with multiple needs
- Coordinating a community-based program to educate youth and their families about helpful local resources
- Creating a Deep End System Assessment, which examines the court’s probation practices and decision making to ensure racial equity

## COMMUNITY IMPACT

**Over 60 youth** helped rank attractive community involvement options through a probation rewards survey (Pierce County, 2015), and the top choices from those surveys are being incorporated into opportunity-based probation practices. **Over 100 parents and caregivers** completed family surveys regarding court services (Pierce County, 2015) and made suggestions for improvement. The grant even allowed for a family council to be launched for the juvenile court. This council is an advisory group of parents and young adults who serve as leaders that guide the program and policy changes. In addition to this, A Common Voice, which is a group of trained parents who have experience raising children with emotional or behavioral needs, provided onsite parent peer support for over 350 families awaiting hearings.

Using collective impact as a base model, programs similar to the ones created by the Pierce County Juvenile Court can make strides in reforming the juvenile justice system. Initiatives such as Probation Transformation ensure the most effective and positive outcomes for marginalized youth across the nation.

# CASE STUDY: CROSSOVER YOUTH PRACTICE MODEL (CYPM)

Allegheny County Juvenile Probation and Allegheny County Office of Children, Youth, and Families (CYF), under the leadership of Judge Guido DeAngelis, implemented the Crossover Youth Practice Model (CYPM) in January 2016. CYPM was developed by the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform at Georgetown University. The Center's work aims to focus the nation's leaders, across systems of care and levels of government, on the key components of a strong juvenile justice reform agenda. A particular focus of the Center's work is on youth known to both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, also known as "crossover youth".

At that time in Allegheny County, 4% of all JPO cases were dually adjudicated, 13% of all JPO cases were also active with CYF, and 15% of all CYF youth age 10 and over were active with Juvenile Probation. The goal of CYPM is to improve outcomes for dually involved youth (i.e. youth involved in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems at the same time). Regular joint case reviews and joint supervisor cabinet meetings reinforce the model.

Other key implementation points include joint training on CYPM for newly hired staff, and refresher training for current staff, which occurs on a regular basis. The Court also hired a Crossover Systems Liaison in 2015, and CYF hired a coordinator in 2016. Under CYPM, there is no lead agency, but rather a clear delineation of individual responsibilities.

The leadership team for the CYPM includes Juvenile Probation, Children's Court, Allegheny County Department of Human Services, and CYF. Their current focus is to better integrate child welfare and juvenile probation data, which impacts both the ability to measure outcomes and to inform policy.

It should also be noted that this model is guided by a coalition of community leaders who are knowledgeable about and dedicated to improving outcomes for youth, and that can spread the message of the CYPM to the broader community for validation.

In 2017, Allegheny County's CYPM was recognized as the Court Operated Program of the Year at the Juvenile Court Judges' Commission Conference in Harrisburg. A major reason why CYPM seems to work in Allegheny County is because the County implemented One Family – One Judge, in which all delinquency and dependency matters for the family are heard by the same judge.

# CASE STUDY: FSG: REIMAGINING SOCIAL CHANGE

The juvenile justice system is no easy system to navigate, especially if you are a child who's racially marginalized. Black and Hispanic youth, in particular, are disproportionately targeted and impacted by the justice system. To make meaningful change, we must dismantle the harmful, systematic norms that allow these children to be targeted. Without addressing the problem at the root, unjust ideologies and practices will continue to thrive.

FSG is a collective impact organization that is made up of strategists, consultants, and other experts that come together to create social change. This coalition has made significant progress in reforming the juvenile justice system of New York. FSG united leaders of law enforcement, child welfare, and other fields from across the New York State juvenile justice system to develop a vision for reform and a strategy to make the vision a reality.

The goal of this collective effort was to ensure youth and community success across the state.

## PURPOSE AND METHODS

Before this reform effort, over half of the youth who entered New York State's juvenile facilities were there for relatively minor offenses (misdemeanors), and the juvenile justice system really wasn't the place for them to go. The system was also under federal investigation

for civil rights abuses. The system, quite simply, was just ineffective and harmful; nine out of ten detained youth returned soon after their release (FSG, 2019). Incarcerating these kids also wasn't cost-effective: the state spent more than a quarter of a million dollars per youth per year (FSG, 2019).

When FSG's collective impact initiative started to work with this system, they were incredibly efficient. They talked to representatives from 62 counties statewide and hundreds of agencies during the research and planning process. Police officers worked with youth advocates to create a vision for a system that worked effectively. Finally, after six months of researching and planning, group members drafted a set of strategies to help them achieve their goals.

## COMMUNITY IMPACT

These are some of the triumphs that the juvenile justice system (and the broader community) saw as a result of this effort:

- Several secure juvenile justice facilities were closed, reducing costs for the state and discouraging the act of aimlessly putting children in facilities

- “Close to Home” legislation was signed into law in 2012, which ensured that children would be served in a local program as opposed to sent to an upstate facility
- Statewide juvenile arrests dropped by 24 percent by the end of 2012 (FSG, 2019)
- Between 2010 and 2013, the number of youth in state custody declined by 45 percent with no increase in crime
- The age of criminal responsibility in New York was raised from 16 to 18

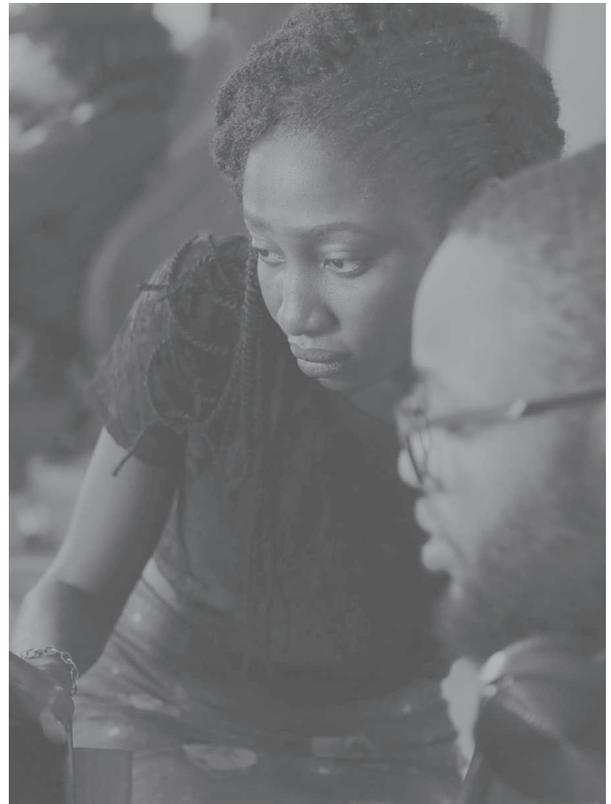
It is evident that collective impact strategies do indeed work when everyone has a shared vision for a better world for our children. Organizations across the United States must be committed to allowing every child to have a fair shot at a successful future.

# CASE STUDY: COMMUNITY INTENSIVE SUPERVISION PROGRAM

The Community Intensive Supervision Program (CISP) is a day/evening program operated by Juvenile Probation. Since its inception in 1990, CISP has been hailed a model of effective community-based program, serving as an alternative to secure detention or residential placement. CISP provides programming and supervision for juveniles while they remain at home and in the community. It also provides intensive aftercare services for juveniles that are returning to the community after placement, assisting them in all aspects of reintegration.

**CISP centers are located in six communities: Garfield, Hill District, McKeesport, North Side, Penn Hills, and Wilkinsburg.** Between 2016 and 2017, CISP commitments increased 16% and discharges increased 12%. In 2017, a total 257 youth were committed to one of these centers and 220 youth were discharged.

Strong community involvement is the foundation of CISP and key to its success. Juveniles in each of the CISP centers routinely perform an array of community service projects, such as removing snow and cutting grass for elderly residents and cleaning neighborhood lots and streets. In 2017, youth in all six CISP centers completed approximately 10,630 hours of community service. That same year, CISP youth participated in an annual car wash to raise money for victims of crime. To date, CISP youth have donated over \$19,000 in car wash proceeds to the Center for Victims.



# CASE STUDY:

## THE PITTSBURGH FOUNDATION'S JUVENILE JUSTICE PILOT

In response to high numbers of referrals to the juvenile probation system in Allegheny County (3,328 in 2015, of which 74 percent were young men; 69 percent of those young men were Black), the Foundation launched the Juvenile Justice Pilot in the fall of 2015 as the first initiative of "100 Percent Pittsburgh".

Designed to generate data from youth who have first-hand knowledge of and/or who are at risk of experiencing the juvenile justice system, **the goals for this pilot project were to:**

- Expand the Foundation's knowledge regarding one of the 100 Percent Pittsburgh target populations, youth ages 12 to 24;
- Identify a series of strategies designed to ethically gather, assess and share the firsthand knowledge of the target population;
- Use these data to add to existing quantitative data;
- Collaborate with youth-service providers and advocates to inform the Foundation's understanding and identify opportunities to better serve the target population;
- Identify opportunities for systems change with members of the target population through grantmaking, convening policy and advocacy initiatives.

Though the purpose of this initiative was to generate new knowledge through elevating the voices of youth who are experts on their own experience, the findings outlined in the Foundation's subsequent report serve as a reminder that potential solutions for how to effectively support youth start with

listening carefully to their voices, sharing their recommendations and committing to an agenda that puts the priorities of youth - not systems - at the center.

Over the course of this eight-month pilot, five discussion groups were conducted with 53 local youth, average age of 18, of which the vast majority had either current or previous experience with the juvenile justice system and had been previously suspended from school.

Youth participants were asked to reflect on a variety of topics, such as which factors and events in their lives brought them to where they are today; and how their own voice and opinion has influenced - or not - their experience. They were also asked to share ideas for changes in the juvenile justice system to better serve young people like

them. Discussion groups were planned and conducted in partnership with youth-serving organizations that have established close relationships with youth vulnerable to, or with active involvement in, the juvenile justice system.

**Several overlapping themes emerged from these discussions that represented commonalities of youth engaged with the juvenile justice system. They are:**

- The importance of listening to the lived experience of youth;
- Differences in system experience by race and gender;
- Physical and sexual abuse;
- Criminalization of youth behavior in schools and community;
- Access to caring and supportive adults and mental health services;
- Race, disproportionality and institutional neglect;
- Hopes and dreams for the future.

Guided by the input and expertise of 14 members of the Advisory Board and 22 youth participants from the five discussion groups, the Foundation made the following recommendations that point to opportunities for action that The Pittsburgh Foundation and other funding partners should follow to develop successful reforms in the juvenile justice system. **Recommendations include:**

- Identify opportunities to address disproportionate system-involvement of youth of color, with a particular focus on girls of color;
- Support reform of school culture, curriculum, and disciplinary policies;
- Identify opportunities to support prevention and diversion initiatives;

- Identify opportunities to increase access to caring adults and mental health services;
- Engage youth as advocates against system involvement by integrating their voices as agents of change, among their peers and in their communities;
- Support efforts to reform the system of Restitution and court-related fees;
- Explore and provide support for interdisciplinary training opportunities;
- Support initiatives that combine data with youth expertise to identify and address disparities

Following the pilot's conclusion, Anna Hollis, executive director of Amachi Pittsburgh and a partner of the Juvenile Justice Pilot, observed that "the most important element of the Voices Initiative has been integrating youth - the 'real experts' - into every step of the process. Making their involvement a priority ensures authenticity of the data and the recommendations."

# CASE STUDY: OPERATION YOUTH SUCCESS: ALLOWING COMMUNITIES TO HAVE AGENCY

Operation Youth Success is a collective impact initiative located in Douglas County, Nebraska, that has worked hard to equitably impact youth that are currently or formerly involved in the juvenile justice system.

Past efforts by this organization were seen to be underinclusive and “driven by the ‘system’ rather than taking an inclusive approach to involving families and youth in the change effort” (Oomer & Parker, 2018).

As a result of this, Operation Youth Success became occupied with taking a different approach to meaningful change.

## PURPOSE AND METHODS

The operation noted that meaningful inclusion and powerful, accurate representation of the entire community was needed to affect the juvenile justice system positively. These identifiers mark strong representation and meaningful inclusion:

- Leaders and influencers have to be representative of the entire community in terms of “demographics and lived experience” (Oomer & Parker, 2018) as opposed to a group of socioeconomically privileged gatekeepers

- The initiatives must be meaningfully engaging and empowering to the community (so that they find value in the effort)
- The initiatives have to be accessible to everyone, especially disenfranchised groups (in terms of transportation, translation services, childcare, compensation, etc.)

## COMMUNITY IMPACT

- Operation Youth Success engaged the community in several ways. The first was through town hall meetings, in which community members gave input on what problems in the community needed the most immediate attention (and possible solutions to those problems). These meetings were held at local high schools. They offered meals, childcare, and even English to Spanish translators for Hispanic community members.
- The initiative also created two community groups: One that specifically focused on mending the broken bridge between leaders of the justice system and community members, and one that was a Youth Council, which was comprised of youth currently or

formerly involved with the system. The goal of the Youth Council was to provide on-going feedback to leaders of the initiative and to allow youth to have direct access to community leaders.

- The Youth Council initiative was particularly successful. This group achieved several milestones, including:
- Creating the initiative's name, "Operation Youth Success"
- Generating feedback for the Steering Committee
- Discussing advocacy strategies
- Helping to reimagine the juvenile justice system
- Giving input for a Family Guide

Most importantly, the Youth Council and Families Working Group sent a message to the community that the people who had been directly affected by the juvenile justice system finally had agency over what happens in their own communities.

# ORGANIZATIONS MENTIONED THROUGHOUT THE RESEARCH

---

1. 1HoodMedia
2. 412 YouthZone
3. Academy Schools
4. Adelphoi
5. Amachi Pittsburgh
6. ARYSE
7. Auberle
8. Braddock Youth Project
9. BroGang
10. Casa San Jose
11. Center for Victims of Violent Crimes
12. Center of Life/Krunk Movement
13. Chalk for Change
14. Coaching Boys to Men
15. Coalition of Against Violence
16. Cultivating Resilient Youth
17. Duquesne University Think Tank
18. Family Support Centers
19. Focus Pittsburgh
20. Foundation of Hope
21. Garfield Gators
22. Greater Valley Coalition Against Violence
23. Group Violence Intervention
24. Gwen's Girls
25. Hartman Shelter
26. Hilltop Huskies
27. Hope for Tomorrow
28. Human Services Organization Administration
29. KidsVoice
30. Macedonia Church
31. Northside Youth Athletic Association
32. One Nation Mentoring Program
33. One PA
34. Pennsylvania Immigration Citizenship Coalition
35. Pittsburgh Action Against Rape
36. Project Hopes and Dreams
37. Shadyside Boys and Girls Club
38. SistersPgh
39. The Brookline Teen Outreach Center
40. The Grayson Center
41. Three Rivers Youth
42. Voices Against Violence
43. Youth Enrichment Services
44. Youth Support Partner Unit

# REFERENCES

---

- Advisory Committee on Zero Tolerance School Discipline Policies. (2016). *Discipline Policies in Pennsylvania's Public Schools*. <http://jsg.legis.state.pa.us/resources/documents/ftp/publications/2016-10-27%20Final%20REPORT%20for%20WEBSITE%20updated%2011.16.16%20%20WB.pdf>
- Allegheny County / City of Pittsburgh / Western PA Regional Data Center. (2018). *Pittsburgh Police Arrest Data* [Data set]. <https://catalog.data.gov/dataset/pittsburgh-police-arrest-data>
- Campaign for Youth Justice. (2019). *Act 4 Juvenile Justice. Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJJPA)* [Fact sheet]. <http://www.act4jj.org/sites/default/files/resource-files/Research%20and%20TA%20Fact%20Sheet%20%281%29.pdf>
- Coalition for Juvenile Justice. (n.d.). *Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act*. <http://www.juvjustice.org/federal-policy/juvenile-justice-and-delinquency-prevention-act>
- Education Law Center. (2013). *Pennsylvania's new truancy law*. [https://www.elc-pa.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/New-Truancy-Law\\_ELC-Analysis-1-10-17.pdf](https://www.elc-pa.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/New-Truancy-Law_ELC-Analysis-1-10-17.pdf)
- Evidence-based Prevention and Intervention Support. (n.d.). *Juvenile Justice System Enhancement Strategy (JJSES)*. <http://www.episcenter.psu.edu/juvenile/jjSES>
- Fifth Judicial District. County of Allegheny. (n.d.). *Juvenile Probation: Balanced and Restorative Justice*. [https://www.alleghenycourts.us/family/juvenile/balanced\\_restorative\\_justice.aspx](https://www.alleghenycourts.us/family/juvenile/balanced_restorative_justice.aspx)
- Huguley, J., Wang, M., Keane, G., Koury, A., & Monahan, K., (2018). *Just Discipline and the School-to-Prison Pipeline in Greater Pittsburgh: Local Challenges and Promising Solutions*. [http://www.heinz.org/UserFiles/Library/Just\\_Discipline\\_and\\_the\\_School\\_to\\_Prison\\_Pipeline\\_in\\_Pittsburgh.pdf](http://www.heinz.org/UserFiles/Library/Just_Discipline_and_the_School_to_Prison_Pipeline_in_Pittsburgh.pdf)
- Juvenile Justice Information Exchange. (n.d.). *Reform Trends*. <https://jjie.org/hub/community-based-alternatives/reform-trends/>
- Juvenile Justice Reform Act, H.R. 6964, 115th Cong. (2017–2018). <https://www.congress.gov/bill/115th-congress/house-bill/6964/text>
- Kania, J. & Kramer, M. (2011). *Collective Impact*. Stanford Social Innovation Review. [https://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective\\_impact](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective_impact)
- Models for Change. (n.d.). *About*. <http://www.modelsforchange.net/about/index.html>
- National Research Council. (2013). *Reforming Juvenile Justice: A Developmental Approach*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/14685>.
- Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. (2014). *Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC)*. [https://www.ojjdp.gov/mpg/litreviews/Disproportionate\\_Minority\\_Contact.pdf](https://www.ojjdp.gov/mpg/litreviews/Disproportionate_Minority_Contact.pdf)
- Pennsylvania Council of Chief Probation Officers. (n.d.). *PA Detention Risk Assessment Instrument*. [https://www.pachiefprobationofficers.org/pa\\_detention\\_risk\\_assessment\\_i.php](https://www.pachiefprobationofficers.org/pa_detention_risk_assessment_i.php)
- Sickmund, M., Sladky, T.J., Kang, W., & Puzanchera, C. (2019). *Easy Access to the Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement* [Data set]. <https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezacjrp/>
- The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Committee. (2019). *2019 Pennsylvania Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Plan*. The Juvenile Justice Delinquency and Prevention Committee on behalf of The Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency. [https://www.pccd.pa.gov/Juvenile-Justice/Documents/2019\\_Pennsylvania\\_Juvenile\\_Justice\\_and\\_Delinquency\\_Prevention\\_Plan.pdf](https://www.pccd.pa.gov/Juvenile-Justice/Documents/2019_Pennsylvania_Juvenile_Justice_and_Delinquency_Prevention_Plan.pdf)
- The Sentencing Project. (2017, October). *Black Disparities in Youth Incarceration*. <https://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/black-disparities-youth-incarceration/>
- Underwood, L. A., & Washington, A. (2016). Mental Illness and Juvenile Offenders. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 13(2), 228. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph13020228>

# TIMELINE REFERENCES

---

Mallett, C.A. & Tedor, M.F. (2018). *Juvenile Delinquency: Pathways to Prevention*. Sage Publications.

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. (n.d.) *JJDPA Timeline 2013* [Timeline]. [https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/structure\\_process/qa04302.asp?qaDate=2013](https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/structure_process/qa04302.asp?qaDate=2013)

The Sentencing Project. (2017). *Change in Black/White Racial Disparity in Youth Incarceration* [Figure]. <https://www.sentencingproject.org/publications/black-disparities-youth-incarceration/>

# CASE STUDY REFERENCES

---

Allegheny County Commission on Juvenile Justice. (2012). *Allegheny County Commission on Juvenile Justice: Report: October 2012: In Response to the May 2010 Interbranch Commission on Juvenile Justice Report*. Court of Common Pleas Allegheny County. <https://www.alleghenycourts.us/downloads/AlleghenyCountyCommissiononJuvenileJustice.pdf>.

Bradbury, S. (2019). A foundation of hope: Pilot program boasts success in aiding at-risk juveniles on North Side. *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. <https://www.post-gazette.com/news/crime-courts/2019/07/20/juvenile-probation-diversion-program-north-side-pittsburgh-allegheny-county-foundation-of-hope/stories/201907200014>.

Brinkman, B.G., Goodkind, S., Elliott, K., Joseph, A., & Doswell, W.M. (2019). *Advocating for Equity for Black Girls: The Formation of the Black Girls Equity Alliance*. Gwendolyn J. Elliot Institute at Gwen's Girls.

Carlino, R. & Clark, B.K. (2017). Allegheny County Juvenile Probation. *2017 Annual Report. Allegheny County Juvenile Justice*. <https://www.alleghenycourts.us/downloads/family/juvenile%20section/annual%20reports/2017.pdf>

Dignity in Schools. (n.d.). *Mission*. <https://dignityinschools.org/about-us/mission/>

DeAngelis, G., Carrigan, K., & Evrard, D. (2015). *Allegheny County Crossover Youth Practice Model* [PowerPoint slides]. <https://www.jcjc.pa.gov/Program-Areas/AnnualConference/Documents/2015%20Conference%20Documents/Crossover%20Youth%20Partnering%20for%20Better%20Outcomes%20.pdf>

FSG Reimagining Social Change. (n.d.). *Reforming New York's Juvenile Justice System*. <https://www.fsg.org/projects/collective-impact-approach-delivers-dramatic-results-new-yorks-juvenile-justice-system>

Huguley, J.P., Wang, M., Thomas, S., Haynick, R., & McQueen, S. (2019). *The Just Discipline Project: 2-Year Review: 2017–2019*. University of Pittsburgh. <http://crsp.pitt.edu/sites/default/files/JDP%202-Year%20Review-Final.pdf>.

Jordan, H. (2016). Pennsylvania commission releases Informative study of school discipline. *End Zero Tolerance*. <https://www.endzerotolerance.org/single-post/2016/12/22/Pennsylvania-Commission-Releases-Informative-Study-of-Public-School-Discipline>

Oomer, M., & Parker, A. (2018). Representation and Inclusion in Collective Impact: A Juvenile Justice Case Study. *Collective Impact Forum*. <https://www.collectiveimpactforum.org/blogs/1816/representation-and-inclusion-collective-impact-juvenile-justice-case-study>

Pierce County, Washington. (n.d.). *Probation transformation year in review* [Fact sheet]. <https://www.co.pierce.wa.us/DocumentCenter/View/40413/Probation-Transformation-2015-Year-In-Review?bidId=>

The Allegheny County Department of Human Services. (2014). *Data Brief: Truancy Prevention Programs in Allegheny County*. <https://www.alleghenycountyanalytics.us/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Data-Brief-Truancy-Prevention-Programs-in-Allegheny-County.pdf>.

The Pittsburgh Foundation. (2017). *A Qualitative Study of Youth and the Juvenile Justice System: A 100 Percent Pittsburgh Pilot Project*. <https://pittsburghfoundation.org/sites/default/files/100%20Percent%20Pittsburgh%20--%20Youth%20and%20Juvenile%20Justice%20Report.pdf>