JJAG Proposed Issue Brief

Proven Alternatives to Detention of DC Youth

Draft as of July 6, 2023

Key Recommendations

1. Limit the use of detention, both pretrial and after DYRS commitment, to youth who pose at least a moderate risk of committing another violent act according to a validated risk, strengths and needs assessment. Engage all system partners, including the DC Superior Court, CSSD, and OAG, to share best practices.

*Relevant Research*: National Institute of Corrections’ [Evidence-Based Decision-Making](https://info.nicic.gov/ebdm/node/107) emphasizes that using risk and needs assessments to guide decisions regarding pretrial release, diversion, and sentencing helps to reduce recidivism and enhance public safety.

1. Fully fund and implement the recommendations outlined in the JJAG PINS report, targeting equitable, low-barrier access to services across DC and with no wrong door to access services. Specifically, these services include:
   1. Respond to status offenses in the community rather than the court.
   2. School-based and community-based hubs where youth and families can access services across the spectrum to meet their needs.
   3. A safe and securely-located respite center.
   4. Mobile response teams to conduct outreach with youth in potentially dangerous situations in the community and transport them to home or services as needed, without engaging law enforcement.
   5. A 24-hour, text-capable hotline to access services, transportation, or support.
   6. A continuum of aligned, accountable service providers, including after-school programs and restorative practices providers, who are trained and funded to effectively provide the services youth and families need.
   7. Training for adults who interact with youth throughout DC's agencies in cultural competence, ACEs, positive youth development, adolescent brain science, and youth-adult partnership.
2. Fully fund and implement with fidelity credible messenger and restorative justice programs, such as community conferencing. Partner with OAG to replicate and expand restorative justice programs.
3. Fully and equitably fund positive youth and family development supports across DC, especially mentoring (or advocate/mentor programs), recreation, and employment.
   1. Create mechanisms for accountability of the executive branch and community-based organizations to ensure full implementation and high quality.
   2. Build networks of support, collaboration and data-sharing across service providers.
   3. Support parents continually, starting early in the lives of children, especially with safe and stable housing and employment.
4. Equitably fund mental healthcare providers and social workers in every school, library and recreation center across DC to identify and address trauma and related needs of children and families as early as possible.
   1. Implement MST and/or FFT as appropriate.
   2. Implement cognitive behavioral therapy + mentoring, such as Becoming a Man, as appropriate.