



**Juvenile Justice
Advisory Group**

Annual Report 2023

**New York State Juvenile Justice Advisory Group
2023 Annual Report**

The U.S. Congress requires the Juvenile Justice Advisory Group (JJAG) to report to the Governor and Legislature annually. This report fulfills that requirement for 2023.

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I. Introduction and Background

The federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP) created the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) to support state and local delinquency prevention efforts and juvenile justice system improvement; establish grant programs; and outline federal standards, known as core protections, for the care and custody of justice-involved youth.

Reauthorization of the JJDP in 2018 updated the core protections, restructured the prevention components of the law, expanded OJJDP research and evaluation purposes, and increased reporting requirements and accountability. These changes took effect Oct. 1, 2019, the beginning of the federal fiscal year.

New York State Executive Order 80 established the Juvenile Justice Advisory Group (JJAG) as the required state advisory group for overseeing the development and implementation of the state plan, supervising the distribution of federal delinquency prevention funds and monitoring compliance with federal juvenile justice mandates. Board members are appointed by the Governor and represent a range of juvenile justice stakeholders: criminal justice, human services, court and research professionals, advocates, formerly justice-involved youth, community members and others.

The Executive Order also designates the state Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) as the agency that supervises the preparation of the state's juvenile justice plan, administers the plan, and manages federal delinquency prevention funding allocated to New York. The DCJS Office of Youth Justice (OYJ) provides administrative support to the JJAG and oversees the implementation and monitoring of contracts on the advisory group's behalf.

The Division of Criminal Justice Services and the state Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) collaborate on certain juvenile justice initiatives. From 2017 through 2019, DCJS and OCFS worked with other state agencies to implement New York's Raise the Age law, which increased the age of criminal responsibility to 18 in two phases: 16-year-olds were no longer charged as adults (Oct. 1, 2018) and 17-year-olds, a year later (Oct. 1, 2019).

The JJAG annually oversees allocation of approximately \$2.1 million in federal grants, which fund delinquency prevention efforts, effective interventions for justice-involved youth, and improvements to youth justice systems. In addition, the JJAG monitors the state's compliance with the four core requirements of the federal law:

- Sight and sound separation of juvenile delinquents from adult offenders.
- Deinstitutionalization of status offenders.
- Removal of juvenile delinquents from adult jails and lockups.
- Reducing disproportionate minority contact in the juvenile justice system.

II. Federal Mandates: Compliance and Monitoring

States receiving federal Title II formula grant funding must comply with those four core protections. DCJS contracts with the state Commission of Correction (SCOC) to monitor and ensure

compliance with the following requirements, which are related to permissible methods of confinement for youth.

- **Deinstitutionalization of status offenders** prohibits placing a youth who has been determined to be a Person in Need of Supervision (PINS) in secure detention or correctional facilities.
- **Separation of juveniles from adult offenders** requires that juveniles who are alleged or found to have been delinquent and/or designated as a PINS must not have any contact with adult inmates awaiting trial or convicted of a crime.
- **Removal of juveniles from adult jails and lockups** prohibits using adult jails and lockups to confine juveniles for any length of time.

The Commission has statutory authority to monitor police lockups, local county correctional facilities and state prisons. Existing New York State laws meet or exceed federally mandated requirements for the custody and detention of status offenders and non-offenders; separation of juveniles from adult offenders; and removal of juveniles from adult jails and lockups. As a result, facilities statewide either meet or exceed federal requirements by complying with state law.

SCOC maintains a monitoring schedule that ensures that all adult jails, lockups, and secure facilities for juveniles are inspected at least every three years. These facilities must report certain incidents to the Commission, which reviews them and takes action as deemed appropriate. The OCFS and New York City's Administration for Children's Services (ACS) are responsible for operating juvenile facilities throughout the state. SCOC and DCJS have agreements in place permitting onsite inspections and reviews of records in all juvenile facilities throughout the state to ensure they comply with federal standards.

New York's strategy for reducing racial and ethnic disparities (R.E.D.) in the youth justice system includes a state-level compliance management effort; support of local reforms; implementation of best practices that are designed to reduce disproportionate minority contact; and technical assistance to local government and nonprofit organizations. Title II funds partially support a full-time, statewide race equity coordinator at DCJS to monitor and improve the reporting of race and ethnicity-related data; identify and provide guidance on implementing best practices; and provide technical assistance and training on racial and ethnic disparities for local and state-level stakeholders.

The race equity coordinator is responsible for monitoring compliance with strategies to reduce racial and ethnic disparities in the juvenile justice system across the state, using a data-driven process to promote an overall equity initiative that supports training, programming, and changing policy and practice. This includes working with state and local entities to enhance the quality and quantity of data measuring disproportionality, collaborating with localities to investigate root causes of disparity when disproportionality is found and implementing strategies to reduce racial and ethnic disparities and increase equity.

To accomplish this work, the race equity coordinator provides training and technical assistance to local and statewide partners, helping to identify policies and practices that may contribute to

disparate treatment of youth of color in the system. Training includes both the historical perspective of race equity and the impact implicit bias has on decision making and everyday practice. In 2023, the coordinator:

- Partnered with the DCJS Office of Probation and Correctional Alternatives, which offers the Fundamentals of Probation Practice training for new probation officers and trained those individuals about racial and ethnic disparities and the mind science of implicit bias, racial anxiety, and stereotype threat.
- Partnered with the DCJS Office of Probation and Correctional Alternatives, which offers Fundamentals of Community Corrections training to individuals working in Alternative to Incarceration programs across New York State and trained those individuals about racial and ethnic disparities and the cognitive processes of bias.
- Introduced Healing Centered Engagement as a lens to employ alongside race equity work to highlight the importance of the necessity of systems and individuals to heal from historic and current traumas.
- Presented about racial and ethnic disparities at local and national conferences.
- Supported the Partnership for Youth Justice and other cross-agency groups working to address R.E.D.
- Supported the Coalition for Juvenile Justice in their efforts to bridge the gap, help elevate and share important research and data that professors and students are undertaking regarding the educational and youth legal systems at Historically Black College and Universities.

III. Juvenile Justice Advisory Group Activities

The JJAG conducted two quarterly meetings in March and June of 2023 and engaged in strategic planning conversations during the second half of the year in preparation for the 2024 – 2026 three-year plan. No new funding proposals were authorized in 2023, as the JJAG opted to focus on first finalizing its strategic action plan for the next three years. Work also continued on prior approved projects connected to the 2021 - 2023 Strategic Action Plan.

A. Three-Year Plan for Juvenile Justice (2021 – 2023)

Federal law requires states to develop three-year plans outlining long-range strategies for use of Title II Formula funds. During interim years, states submit annual applications that update accomplishments, provide juvenile justice data and demonstrate compliance with the federal law's core protections. The JJAG approved its three-year plan for 2021 – 2023 and began implementation of its new priority areas.

PRIORITY AREA 1: Support efficient coordination, alignment and delivery of services that reflect the priorities of state agencies and the Partnership for Youth Justice throughout New York State: Highlight successful practices and encourage the use of new tools and practices to increase system effectiveness and measure outcomes.

PRIORITY AREA 2: Establish and implement youth justice policy priorities: Effectively and proactively serve all youth who encounter the youth justice system, while placing an enhanced focus on prevention and the following priority areas: racial and ethnic disparities; trauma, healing, and behavioral health; youth-centered services; partnerships with schools; police and community partnerships; and training and certification of youth-serving professionals.

PRIORITY AREA 3: Enhance positive youth, family and community impacts and outcomes: Partner with youth, families, and communities in youth justice system work to improve outcomes and create meaningful connections for positive outcomes.

Race Equity Work

The race equity coordinator developed the state's three-year plan to advance racial equity. As a part of the data-driven, outcome-oriented plan, New York State will work to decrease disproportionality of Black youth by 10 percent by increasing the use of diversion. New York State utilized the data from the last two years to identify this target.

The state also identified the following youth justice policy and programming priorities for the next few years to achieve this goal, all of which lay the foundation for New York State's R.E.D. plan for 2021 – 2023:

- Enhance data capacity, collection, and analysis to target interventions and measure outcomes.
- Development and implement New York State R.E.D. Advisory Committee priorities aimed at providing guidance for best practices on R.E.D reduction strategies.
- Provide training and technical assistance for state and local youth justice systems and stakeholders.
- Monitor the implementation of systems change through an equity lens to ensure that all youth benefit from reform efforts regardless of race, ethnicity, or gender.

In 2021, the DCJS Office of Youth Justice, Center for Children's Law and Policy, and the Youth Justice Institute also launched the New York State Policy Equity Academy. Teams of youth justice practitioners from Albany, Monroe, Onondaga, Schenectady, and Westchester counties participated in asynchronous and synchronous trainings, with the goal of building their capacities and skills so they can implement programs and policies to improve outcomes for youth of color in their communities. Upon completion of the virtual learning, teams received technical assistance from the Center for Children's Law and Policy and the Youth Justice Institute to develop and implement action plans to increase equity at adjustment (diversion) for Black youth. Plans are currently being implemented, with continued technical assistance being provided throughout 2023. In June 2023, participating teams were convened for a closing meeting, which further helped to solidify their implementation plans and technical assistance moving forward. This initiative was funded by the JJAG, federal Delinquency Prevention Programming, and the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Race Equity Trainings & Technical Assistance

In April, May, and October, OYJ staff provided implicit bias and race equity training for OPCA's Fundamentals of Probation Practice training for 60 new probation officers across the state. In addition to training probation staff, OYJ staff also trained 30 SNUG street outreach workers on implicit bias.

The Statewide Race Equity Coordinator has provided ongoing technical assistance to local government and community-based organizations and has assisted counterparts in other states as they address racial and ethnic disparities within their jurisdictions. OYJ Staff also provided trainer-the-trainer and coaching sessions to OPCA and SNUG staff in the areas of race equity and implicit bias. In 2023, OYJ staff lent expertise to statewide committees such as the Runaway Intervention Work Group and the State Education Department's Girls of Color Work Group.

Big Brothers, Big Sisters Mentoring Program

In March 2022, the JJAG approved funding to support targeted mentoring programs by partnering with three Big Brothers Big Sisters sites: Westchester and Putnam counties; Erie and Niagara counties and Southern Tier; and southern Adirondacks. Each of the three sites planned to increase the number of mentor/mentee matches, including virtual and/or community-based activities, and to implement wrap-around services and treatment strategies that would be used to inform additional funding and programming opportunities for mentoring projects. In Westchester and Putnam counties, the Big Futures program was extended to 17 high school students and the mentoring programming added an additional 21 matches. Similarly, the southern Adirondacks site successfully recruited 25 "Bigs" to serve as mentors, with a target of numbering 50, by the end of the year. There were an additional 15 community-based matches during this grant period, with an average match length of 31.1 months. The Erie and Niagara counties and the Southern Tier program reported that child and family inquiries increased by 84 percent because of this funding, and new matches increased by 19.4 percent. Across all three sites, match lengths averaged 29.75 months with an average retention rate of 85.65 percent, which is higher than the national average (17.1 months and 34%)¹.

In December 2022, the JJAG approved additional funding to support mentoring programs across New York State by expanding the partnership with the original three Big Brothers Big Sisters sites and adding two new ones. Partnering with sites that have implemented evidence-based model programs and those with excellent outcomes, is intended to drive expansion to other areas that will positively impact youth across the state. While all five sites will support jurisdiction specific programming, the three previously funded sites will "mentor" the two new sites as they build capacity within each of their programs. Award letters went out in early 2023 to the sites and contracts were executed for programming to begin. The awards are being used to fund recruitment efforts for mentor volunteers to expand the reach of the proven Big Brothers Big Sisters model. The programming will be in effect through the end of 2024.

¹ [2020 Big Brothers Big Sisters of America Annual Impact Report](#)

Equity Champions Certification

In September 2022, the JJAG authorized funding to develop an Equity Champions Certification program. The primary purpose of the initiative is to increase capacity statewide by creating a network of equity champions to advance awareness and build capacity to ensure equity is at the center of programming and policy development, improvement and/or change, at the state, local and community level. This will be accomplished by implementing a standardized equity-based and healing centered fundamentals curriculum that increases understanding, action planning and leadership for staff across youth-serving sectors. Providing education and skills – to lessen predictability of youth justice system involvement based upon race and ethnicity – is central to the program. Planning will take place throughout 2023 and 2024, with the goal of launching the program in the fall of 2024.

Healing the Practitioner Learning Series

At its September 2022 quarterly meeting, the JJAG approved funding to develop a Healing the Practitioner Learning Series. In light of COVID-19, community violence and racial injustice, there has been a lot of focus on what it may take to heal systems. However, it is imperative to also understand what is needed to heal the people that work within these very systems. Youth-serving professionals are often charged with managing families in various stages of crisis, which were exacerbated by the pandemic. To support those individuals (who also are experiencing their own personal traumas, losses, etc.), the JJAG approved the development of a virtual training atmosphere for a healing, trauma, and overall wellness for youth-serving practitioners/educators surrounding the dimensions of wellness, including but not limited to physical, emotional, social, community and purpose. Programming is expected to occur in 2024.

Elevating Healing and Advancing Equity Conference

The JJAG also approved funding in December 2022 for the development and hosting of a conference that would allow for the exploration of research and best practices nationally, while also highlighting best practices and innovations within New York State. This conference will bring together youth-serving stakeholders, practitioners, youth and families to expand knowledge and further identify opportunities for partnership in advancing equity and elevating healing across New York State. The conference will focus on ways that young people and their communities – as well as multi-disciplinary stakeholders, such as law enforcement, probation, education and mental health professionals, and others – can work together to foster individual and collective healing, while combating racial and ethnic disparities. Specifically, the conference will focus on:

- innovative strategies and best practices in operating through an equity lens;
- how systems can foster individual and collective healing;
- the role that community, young people, and healing play in addressing R.E.D.; and
- the business case for advancing equity.

The primary goal of this conference is to help system stakeholders combat racial and ethnic disparities and identify solutions that foster healing through peer-to-peer learning, and expert training. Plenary and workshop sessions will provide participants a hands-on opportunity to explore solutions that have been shown to work within New York State and other jurisdictions

across the country. The conference is slated to be held in Albany from March 27 through 28, 2024.

New York State Youth Justice Institute

In December 2015, the JJAG approved funding to launch the New York State Youth Justice Institute (YJI). The JJAG renewed and enhanced its commitment to the YJI in subsequent years, with its latest commitment in June 2021, which provided funds to support the Institute through the end of 2023. In 2023, DCJS decided to assume responsibility to provide funding for ongoing operations and support of the YJI, beginning in January 2024.

Vision and Strategic Action Items

The YJI's Executive Director, Giza Lopes, Ph.D., has established a vision for the Institute to become the premier resource for evidence-informed policy and practice nationally and beyond by implementing the following strategies: serve as an information hub for stakeholders; cultivate and continually support practitioners' commitment to research-informed practices; develop a prolific and ever-growing network of research by investing in future generations of juvenile justice researchers and leveraging the University's academic expertise; foster and sustain synergy among stakeholders by bringing together government agencies, practitioners, and academics to advance and share knowledge, brainstorm innovations, and engage in agenda-setting; and leverage current public investment to attract external funding that will enable the YJI to grow.

In line with each of these strategies, and with the goal of increasingly centering young people's voices and their experience and fostering their professional development, the following activities and initiatives have been undertaken or were in the planning stages by the Institute as of December 2023.

Centering Youth Voice and Experience and Fostering Their Professional Development

Activity #1 – Providing opportunities for experiential education for undergraduate and graduate students

The New York State Youth Justice Institute (YJI) Scholars Program is a research-focused internship that trains students in a wide variety of research skills, develops their knowledge about youth justice topics, and connects them to relevant work at the state's leading agencies. The YJI refers to its interns as Scholars to convey the Institute's commitment to their development as youth justice researchers and professionals. Most Scholars have interned for course credits through the University at Albany, although many have also volunteered or held remunerated positions. The Scholar cohorts are comprised of undergraduate- and graduate-level students from many departments within the University with most coming from the School of Criminal Justice (72%). Scholars have also come from other programs such as Business, Data Sciences, Political Science, Psychology, and Social Welfare. In 2023, as part of the Scholars program, the YJI hired its first 'Young Artist in Residence'. This is an undergraduate student majoring in Arts at the University at Albany who is tasked with developing avatars for members of our Youth Justice Peer Advisory Council.

Historically, Scholars have assisted in the design and publication of the YJI's main website, microsites, social media, podcasts, and interactive dashboards. They have also assisted in the organization of well-attended monthly and ad hoc events. Scholars participate in high-level meetings with stakeholders and are actively involved in research tasks from planning to dissemination. Their contributions have become integral to YJI's work. By December 2023, the YJI had trained 53 undergraduate and graduate Scholars as part of this program, with many continuing on to obtain doctoral or law degrees, entering the police profession, or becoming practitioners in the field of youth justice.

In Spring 2023, YJI Scholars had the opportunity to present their research at a university-wide showcase event. Sponsored by the University's Academic Affairs, the showcase brought together constituents from within and outside academia to learn about research being conducted by undergraduate and graduate students at UAlbany. Scholars presented analyses of media coverage of justice-impacted girls, increasing attention by media to car thefts, and an evaluation of Stepping Stones.

Activity # 2 – NYS Youth Justice Peer Advisory Council

In December 2021, with funding from OCFS, the YJI hired a full-time Youth Specialist to complete the planning process for the state's inaugural Youth Justice Peer Advisory Council and begin the recruitment process of its participants. Launched in Spring 2022, the inaugural Council initially onboarded eight young adults between ages 18 and 25, with a lived justice system and/or runaway homeless youth experience. In 2023 the PAC had five reliably active members. The YJI engaged in another round of recruitment and will do so again in 2024. Its members come from across the state. The Council's mission is to empower young adults with lived experience to become key advisors on youth justice policy and practice development in New York State.

Training

Activity #3 – YJI Lunch & Learn Webinar Series

March 2023 marked the third anniversary of the YJI's "[Lunch & Learn](#)," a webinar series featuring cutting-edge research experts whose work can benefit youth justice practitioners. As of December 2023, the YJI had hosted 34 webinars with 8,600 registrations across all sessions, garnering many more asynchronous viewings through Facebook and other social media channels. Lunch & Learn webinars have covered diverse themes, such as restorative justice practices, the role of familial supervision in the context of juvenile probation, and system reforms for emerging adults. The audience for this series includes a mixture of academics, youth justice practitioners and educators from across the globe, as well as local, state, and federal employees. Surveys on participants' experiences are overwhelmingly positive, as noted in a second annual report, which was prepared for the Institute's Executive Board and is available upon request.

Activity #4 – NYS Policy Equity Academy

Launched in Summer 2021, the New York State Policy Equity Academy represents a new training, technical assistance, and skill-building opportunity for youth justice professionals. It is designed to support local teams with implementing policies and reforms to reduce racial and ethnic disparity in the youth justice system. This first iteration of the Academy was developed to target disparity at the adjustment (diversion) system point in New York State, and the initial teams were in Albany,

Monroe, Onondaga, Schenectady, and Westchester counties. To support this training, the YJI developed a dedicated learning management system, which houses curriculum that can be accessed virtually by Academy participants.

The training portion of the Academy was completed in February 2022, and qualifying individuals received a YJI Certificate. In March 2022, the Center for Children’s Law and Policy and YJI began conducting technical assistance meetings with each team, on a semi-monthly basis, to support implementation of R.E.D. reduction work plans, which were developed during initial training. Qualifying teams received up to \$50,000 each to implement their reform plans. The official technical assistance portion of the Academy concluded in June 2023. However, the YJI, with DCJS OYJ staff, continues to have occasional contact with some of the teams and are preparing tools to collect data to identify the results of R.E.D. reduction interventions.

Activity #5 – 2024 Elevating Equity & Advancing Healing Conference

Sponsored by the NYS JJAG, the 2024 Elevating Equity & Healing Conference is being organized by OYJ in partnership with the YJI. It will be held in March 2024. Since fall 2023, YJI staff has helped with several aspects of conference planning, including agenda development, recruitment strategies, and registration resources. The YJI is organizing a ‘Talk to Action’ plenary panel to be held at the conference and our Spring 2024 YJI Scholars will be preparing and presenting research posters at the conference.

Research

Activity #6 – Participatory Action Research with BIPOC Girls in New York State

Since Summer 2021, the YJI has partnered with faculty from the University at Albany and Michigan State University to conduct a participatory research project on the self-described needs and experiences of BIPOC girls across New York State. The study is designed to deepen the understanding of the experiences of girls (including those who identify as femmes, non-binary, and gender nonconforming) in New York’s criminal justice, juvenile justice, and child welfare systems, as well as factors contributing to the participants’ healing and resiliency. The project, led by Sarah Mountz, Ph.D., and LeConte Dill, who holds a Ph.D. in Public Health, received approval in late 2022. Recruitment of participants followed, and interviews took place in 2023. Findings from the study are expected in 2024.

Activity # 7 – Local Data Needs Assessment Project

In Summer 2021, the YJI and OCFS began work to identify needs and gaps in the abilities of New York’s localities to collect, access, analyze, and use juvenile justice data in their decision-making process. Between 2022 and 2023, YJI implemented a three-phase process to gather information from counties on needs and assets. A statewide survey was completed in 2022, while focus groups, interviews and observations were completed in 2023. A report produced with the findings and recommendations is available upon request.

Activity #8 – Stepping Stones Evaluation

The YJI is conducting a process evaluation of Berkshire Farm’s Stepping Stones program. The evaluation includes data from 2018 from Saratoga, Washington, and Erie counties. Data on youth and families in the program was collected and processed and, in 2023, and several

recommendations were made to Berkshire Farm staff, leading to revisions of the original logic model. At the invitation of Berkshire Farm, the YJI team presented the results of this work to their Executive Board, and efforts to obtain additional funding are ongoing.

Activity #9 – Violence Prevention: Collaborative Efforts *Evaluability Assessment & Survey of Outreach Workers*

With support from DCJS' Research Consortium, the YJI forged a partnership with faculty from the University at Albany to conduct an evaluability assessment of SNUG. The study, led by David Hureau, Ph.D., included surveys of SNUG outreach workers from 12 sites. Those surveys were concluded in Spring 2023, and a report was generated for DCJS leadership.

Outreach Workers Professional Certificate

Similar to the creation process for the Policy Equity Academy, the YJI is collaborating with OYJ to develop a formal certificate course for violence prevention outreach workers in New York State. SNUG outreach workers will comprise the initial cohort of students, with subsequent courses opened to other outreach workers and those interested in becoming outreach workers. A Request for Proposals seeking assistance in curriculum development was published in late 2023, and the certificate course will launch in late 2024 or early 2025.

Project RISE Process Evaluation

The YJI partnered with OYJ to conduct a process evaluation of Project RISE's roll-out, implementation, planning, and decision-making throughout the project's first five years. This includes working in collaboration with OYJ staff and local stakeholders to assess the existing metrics and to develop new qualitative and quantitative metrics of the project's impacts. Working collaboratively with a sample of grantees and subgrantees, the Institute will propose tangible recommendations on how grantees and subgrantees can collect relevant, holistic information that will improve their ability to compete for future private, state, and federal grant opportunities. In 2023, YJI worked closely with OYJ staff to implement several aspects of this evaluation. Progress reports were presented to DCJS' leadership on a quarterly basis, following the full execution of a memo of understanding that supports this work.

Technical Assistance

Activity #10 – Technical Assistance and Research Assistance that are Responsive to Partners' Needs

One of the chief objectives of the YJI is to provide technical assistance to its partner agencies and localities in New York State. To facilitate, systematize, and track its receipt of technical assistance requests, the YJI maintains a Technical Assistance Request Portal. Via this portal, stakeholders can request specific assistance and describe their needs, timeframes, point of contacts, and other relevant information. The portal is accessible on the main page of the YJI's website. All requests are reviewed by the YJI's associate for Training and Technical Assistance and executive director. In 2023, there were eight requests submitted to the portal, four of which were requests specifically directed to the Youth Justice Peer Advisory Council. Six requests came from state agencies, while two came from a college and a non-profit organization.

Examples of technical assistance and research activities that are responsive to our partners' needs include:

Mentoring Dashboard

Starting in August 2021, the YJI and OYJ began a collaborative development of a statewide mentoring dashboard. The dashboard is designed to serve as an interactive repository of information on programs in New York State that are available for families, service providers, and justice stakeholders seeking mentoring services for youth. The dashboard was launched in January 2023 to mark National Mentoring Month and is continually updated by YJI staff. Accompanying public education materials, such as a 'Facts & Stats' downloadable document, were developed and disseminated through multiple strategies to stakeholders throughout the state.

Safe Harbour

As part of its memo of understanding with OCFS, the YJI has developed a reflective brief on the implementation processes and successes of the Safe Harbour Law for youth services. These efforts have included developing a brief outline, interviewing Safe Harbour stakeholders in four counties, conducting relevant research on implementation history and context, and writing an initial draft of the brief. In 2023, YJI provided a final draft to OCFS for release in 2024.

Human Trafficking

Between May 2023 and August 2023, the YJI facilitated meetings for a short-term working group on human trafficking of youth and young adults in New York State. The group was formed to explore potential multi-agency collaboration for federal grant opportunities to address the human trafficking of youth. Members included representatives from OCFS, DCJS, the state Office Mental Health, Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, and the state Department of Health. As part of the process, we guided participants through a multi-step problem identification and prioritization process that resulted in several potential next steps for policy, practice, training, and information gathering. After completing the initial facilitation process, the group transformed into a subcommittee of the state's Interagency Task Force on Human Trafficking.

Importantly, in 2023, the YJI also provided assistance to the NYS JJAG in developing their latest three-year strategic action plan. This assistance has shaped the discussions and included the following tasks:

- Hosting and assisting with design and facilitation of JJAG meetings and retreat;
- Joining OYJ staff to co-interview leadership from the Coalition for Juvenile Justice;
- Collecting and analyzing available State Advisory Group (SAG) plans;
- Preparing and presenting a 'youth data snapshot' containing actionable information on multiple dimensions impacting young New Yorkers and their families;
- Conducting a focus group with members of the YJI's Peer Advisory Council, whose perspectives and systems-involvement expertise was shared to inform the JJAG's three-year plan;
- Preparing, distributing, analyzing, and presenting a survey aimed at identifying JJAG priorities;

- Preparing and joining OYJ in co-facilitating a Results-Based Accountability (RBA) exercise with small groups of JJAG members;
- Collaborating with the JJAG chair and OYJ staff in designing a strategy to disburse future funding in line with priorities and aimed at maximizing impact.

Activity #11 – Repository of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices

In 2022, the YJI launched an interactive tool to support practitioners across the nation with identifying evidence-based youth justice and family-focused programs and practices. The [Evidence-Based Programs and Practices in Youth Justice Clearinghouse](#) was created with the continued support and input of various youth justice stakeholders, including researchers, policymakers, and practitioners who directly serve youth. YJI researchers continually maintain and update the resources contained in the dashboard, which has garnered over 6,000 views.

Information Hub and Dissemination

Activity #12 – Web Content and Microsites

The YJI's website is a dynamic source of information, which is routinely updated. The website also hosts area-specific microsites, including one focused on racial justice resources, and another, launched in 2023, which focuses on gender issues related to youth.

Activity #13 – Newsletters and Social Media Presence

Social Media

The YJI has a robust presence on social media: X (formerly Twitter), Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn. Each week, the YJI publishes “Did you know?” posts on these platforms, as well as other relevant information. The number of followers on each of these platforms continues to grow and amplifies the presence and brand of the YJI in the state and beyond. We plan to continue investing in this strategy in coming year. This initiative is supported primarily by the efforts of our Scholars.

On the Same Page – Monthly Newsletters

The Institute routinely publishes a newsletter, “On the Same Page,” which is distributed to over 3,000 unique subscribers. The YJI newsletters feature relevant research, news, and evidence-based information to a growing audience. Several issues include research briefs prepared by YJI Scholars on diverse youth justice topics. The Institute has also produced several awareness-focused outreach campaigns featuring topics such that are relevant to youth justice practitioners.

Activity #14 – News Coverage of Youth Justice Issues

Over the last four years, YJI Scholars have created a database of youth justice news articles from all over the world. Each article is coded by theme and displayed in an interactive, publicly available dashboard. The dashboard has been accessed over 3,000 times and was independently selected as a ‘featured viz’ by Tableau Public. Next steps for this project include creation of permanent links, data analysis, identification of trends in media coverage, and exploration of other research questions. In 2023, YJI graduate students presented preliminary findings of this project at a Partnership for Youth Justice quarterly meeting, as well as to JJAG members and at the University at Albany’s showcase event.

Outreach Efforts and External Funding

Activity #15 – Committees & Local, State, and National Presence

YJI staff members routinely participate in and provide technical assistance and increased capacity to a variety of state committees and initiatives, including the New York State Partnership for Youth Justice and its subcommittees. Additionally, the executive director and associate for technical assistance routinely identify and engage with relevant national and local stakeholders to introduce them to the work of the Institute and look for collaborative opportunities. In 2023, YJI Executive Director, Giza Lopes, Ph.D., was invited by Evident Change to participate in an advisory capacity with the organization of a dual-systems youth conference. The conference, supported by W. T. Grant Foundation and others, took place in Philadelphia, and was held for a select group of changemakers in the areas of research, public policy, and practice. Executive Director Lopes attended this conference and the 2023 American Society of Criminology's annual conference.

Activity #16 – External Funding

The YJI remains committed to seeking funding that will help it grow and move toward self-sustainability. To that end, the YJI submitted a proposal to develop a federally funded Center for Youth Justice Transformation to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. YJI, OYJ and DCJS' Office of Justice and Research Performance also continued planning discussions for further collaborative efforts that would generate federal or private funding for specific projects.