



Juvenile Justice
Advisory Group

Annual Report 2024

New York State Juvenile Justice Advisory Group 2024 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 2024.

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I. Introduction and Background

The federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDPA) 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 JJDPA 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, appointed by the Governor, represent a wide range of juvenile justice stakeholders, including 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 behalf of the advisory group.

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.

SCOC 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 to ensure all adult jails, lockups, and secure facilities for juveniles are inspected at least every three years. These facilities must report certain incidents to SCOC, which reviews them and acts as deemed appropriate. The Office of Children and Family Services (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. Training includes both the historical perspective of race equity and the impact implicit bias has on decision making and everyday practice. In 2024, 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.
- Moderated the Youth Justice Institute Lunch and Learn Series.
- Presented on racial and ethnic disparities at local and national conferences, including the NYS Office of Forensic Services Training, the NYS SNUG Annual Conference and the coalition for Juvenile Justice Annual Conference.

III. Juvenile Justice Advisory Group Activities

In 2024, the JJAG convened four quarterly meetings, in March, April, October and December, focused on implementing its 2025 Strategic Plan.

A. Three-Year Plan for Juvenile Justice (2024 - 2026)

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 strategic plan for years 2024 - 2026 and began implementation of its new priority areas. To implement strategies in a sustainable and cost-effective manner, the JJAG will use a three-category designation for funding investments, *small*, *medium*, and *large*. This includes funding for:

Transformative Youth Justice Hubs: Creation of four Transformative Youth Justice Hubs designed to coordinate and sustain partnerships and cross-pollinate prevention efforts and best practices at the local level.

Youth, Family, and Community Toward Success (YFACTS) Center: Development and support of data infrastructure, in collaborative communities, for the creation of standardized metrics of youth success and system equity.

Direct Service Programming: Invest in direct youth-serving programming that strengthens promising strategies and address racial and ethnic disparities, while advancing prevention efforts for youth and young adults with a focus on adolescent development. Funding will be directed toward programming that increases meaningful youth, family, and community engagement, while increasing access to trauma, healing and behavioral supports.

Race Equity Work

The race equity coordinator developed the state's three-year plan to advance racial equity. As part of the data-driven, outcome-oriented plan, New York State will work to increase equity for Black youth by 5 percent, as evidenced by an increase in the use of prevention programs and a decrease in the number of Black youth arrested and referred to court. 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 2024 – 2026:

- Continued enhancement of data capacity, collection, and analysis to target interventions and measure outcomes.
- The re-engagement and development of New York State R.E.D. Advisory Committee priorities aimed at providing guidance for best practices on R.E.D reduction strategies.
- Yearly conference convening for youth justice practitioners, community members, youth and families centered around advancing equity and promoting healing centered engagement.
- Assessment of New York City data by borough to identify areas for targeted reduction efforts.
- Provision of 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.

Race Equity Trainings & Technical Assistance

In July 2024, OYJ staff delivered a train-the-trainer course in implicit bias and race equity to 15 new trainers across the state as part of the Fundamentals of Probation Practice training offered by the Office of Probation and Correctional Alternatives (OPCA). OYJ staff provided implicit bias training to 200 SNUG Street Outreach Workers at the Annual SNUG Conference held in April. OYJ presented at the Governor's Race Equity Workgroup on Race Equity in NYS.

The Statewide Race Equity Coordinator provides ongoing technical assistance to local government and community-based organizations and supports counterparts in other states as they address racial and ethnic disparities within their jurisdictions. OYJ Staff moderated the YJI's Lunch and Learn Series entitled: "Why are so many young people suffering from meaninglessness, loneliness, and anxiety, and what can we do about it?" This virtual session was attended by 200 individuals.

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. The plan for each of the three sites was 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. To advance this progress, 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. The contract period ran from January 1, 2023 through December 31, 2024.

Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Southern Adirondacks

Programming in the Southern Adirondacks aimed to increase the number of qualified and caring members to serve as "Bigs" to youth through marketing campaigns to assist with recruitment of volunteers and mentors to support youth with successful matches between mentors and youth in the community. As a result of recruitment efforts, the program recruited an additional 94 mentors. Additionally, a total of 110 matches were made during the program period. Finally, the program created and expanded group mentoring opportunities and to serve more total youth through mentoring and supportive services through additional staffing investments. Each of these initiatives was highly successful. The original goal was to establish three group mentoring programs designed to support high-need youth in structured group settings. However, because of its success, the program operated six group mentoring programs and expanded the curriculum to include financial literacy, budget setting and maintaining a budget. This format has been shared nationally with other Big Brothers Big Sisters agencies as an innovative model for impact. By expanding their mentoring and supportive services, the program was able to provide services to an additional 960 youth by servicing youth on the waitlist, siblings matched and drop in programming.

Be a Friend Program – Big Brothers Big Sisters of Erie, Niagara, and Southern Tier

The Be A Friend Program had three objectives in implementing programming:

- increase enrollment of youth in programming,
- provide ongoing support and case management to the mentoring relationships, and
- evaluate client satisfaction and program participation outcomes.

Over the course of the contract period, the program was able to serve an additional 184 youth and retain 89.47% of youth enrolled in the program for six months. Based upon the Youth Outcomes Survey (YOS), 88.4% of enrolled youth showed an improvement in at least one pro-social attitude or behavior that is measured by the YOS.

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Westchester County, Inc.

Westchester County Programming aimed to increase current programming capacity as well as implement and establish youth justice policy priorities and deliver prevention efforts and youth-centered services. As a result, the program achieved the following deliverables:

- Hired a match engagement coordinator to schedule and manage monthly family and match events to encourage closer relationships with families and siblings to foster the “mentoring the family” model. This resulted in a match length increase from 31 months to 37.8 months and a retention rate that is consistently above 95 percent.
- Expanded Big Futures programming to include sophomores in the 6-week summer internship and offer engagement to all participants every other month in a bonding activity.
- Increased matches by 15% in both community and site-based programs.
- Developed a Youth Outcomes Plan to gather information in the development of personalized plans for youth.
- Hosted group mentoring programs at the Port Chester Middle School and the Yonkers School for Excellence.

Equity Champions Certification

In September 2022, the JJAG authorized funding to develop an Equity Champions Certification program that would provide education and skills to reduce the likelihood of youth justice system involvement based upon race and ethnicity. The program’s primary purpose is to increase capacity statewide by establishing a network of equity champions to advance awareness and build capacity, ensuring equity is at the center of programming and policy development, improvement and/or change at the state, local and community level. This would be accomplished by implementing a standardized equity-based and healing centered fundamentals curriculum that strengthens understanding, action planning and leadership for staff across youth-serving sectors. Due to staffing constraints and the transformation of the youth justice landscape, this program is currently on hold.

Healing the Practitioner Learning Series

At its September 2022 quarterly meeting, the JJAG approved funding to develop a Healing the Practitioner Learning Series. Considering COVID-19, community violence and racial injustice, there has been focus on healing systems. However, based upon staffing constraints and research into other existing support for service providers developed post COVID, the JJAG authorized repurposing the previously approved funding to support an initiative for youth members as described below.

Establishment of Youth Advisory Committee

The direct impact that juvenile justice programs and policies have on the youth population gives rise to informed initiatives and planning. The youth, families, and communities with involvement in the systems provide a unique perspective on program needs and outcomes. Recognizing the power of youth voice, at its quarterly meeting in June 2024, the JJAG approved funding to partner with a community-based non-profit to assist in establishing a Youth Action Committee. The Youth Action Committee will act as an entirely youth-led, decision-making subcommittee that will offer recommendations to the JJAG. Grant funds will compensate youth JJAG members for their participation in meetings, related projects, and professional development. DCJS plans to release a Request for Application in 2025 to support this initiative.

Elevating Healing and Advancing Equity Conference

At the quarterly meeting held in December 2022, the JJAG approved funding for the development and hosting of a conference to explore research and best practices nationally, while also highlighting best practices and innovations within New York State. The inaugural conference took place from March 27 – 28, 2024 at the Empire State Convention Center in Albany. It convened 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 focused 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 workshop sessions of the conference focused 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.

Plenary and workshop sessions gave participants hands-on opportunities to explore solutions that have been shown to work within New York State and other jurisdictions across the country. The conference was highly successful with over 400 individuals in attendance. Building on this momentum, the JJAG ratified funding the conference for the next three years. The next conference will take place in May of 2025.

Transformative Youth Justice Hubs

In June 2024, the JJAG approved funding to establish four Transformative Youth Justice Hubs designed to coordinate/sustain partnerships and cross-pollinate prevention efforts and best practices at the community level. Two urban and two rural hubs will operate as partnerships to coordinate and provide support to youth and families at prevention and re-entry points. Partnerships will be diverse and may include, for example, faith-based organizations, parent-focused/lead organizations, youth service organizations (e.g., community-based organizations), schools, courts, law enforcement, mental health serving organizations, and government entities. Each hub will maintain a lead fiscal partner and coordinating partner, and a board with co-chairs of different backgrounds. Partnerships will provide prevention support services that center youth well-being domains (i.e., physical health, mental and behavioral health, family, community, economic stability, and education) with a specific priority towards adolescent age youth.

Hubs will be closely connected to the New York State Youth Justice Institute (YJI), which will provide

oversight and support through its new Youth, Family, and Community Toward Success (YFACTS) Data Center.

Activities of the Hubs could include the following:

- Build relationships with youth, adults, and families.
- Issue guidance and resources relevant to youth justice.
- Use trauma-informed, healing-centered, and violence reduction methods to decrease incidents of harmful behavior.
- Increase participation in vocational and educational programming.
- Encourage participation in mental health and well-being programs.
- Establish relationships with law enforcement agencies and the court system to support diversion services.
- Improve the socio-emotional and behavioral response of youth in the community.
- Foster peer-to-peer and traditional mentoring activities and programs.
- Envision, create, and implement innovative learning community of best practices and resources in collaboration with the YFACTS Center.

The New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS), in collaboration with the New York State Youth Justice Institute (YJI), will develop a Request for Application (RFA) to establish four Hubs with a targeted release date in early 2025.

Youth, Family, and Community Toward Success (YFACTS) Center

In 2024, the JJAG authorized funding to establish the new Youth, Family and Community Toward Success (YFACTS) Data Center (the “Center”) in conjunction with the NYS Youth Justice Institute. The Center will coordinate the measurement, gathering, and dissemination of youth justice data (qualitative and quantitative) on prevention services, efforts, and impact, especially in the communities served by the newly established Transformative Youth Justice Hubs. The Center will be created and overseen by the YJI and will coordinate the data infrastructure across the Transformative Youth Justice Hubs to support the development of the hubs and provide information to state government agencies regarding impact of prevention efforts in New York State.

The Center will provide two main functions to align with its purpose:

Data Measurement, Gathering, and Dissemination with and for the Transformative Youth Justice Hubs. This will involve participatory development of common measurements across the Hubs, including field testing, piloting, and implementation. The coordination will include training and technical assistance for the Hubs to organize data infrastructures for progress monitoring (e.g., inputs and outputs of programming, and impact or outcome examination). The coordination will also help support the establishment of partnerships between the Hubs and local researchers to encourage sustainability of data-informed initiatives.

Gathering and Dissemination of Data on Prevention and Progress. The types of prevention measures being coordinated across New York State will be shared to demonstrate the unifying knowledge and servicing approach being taken. Prevention measures and progress will inform policy and practice development that addresses youth justice disparities and expands prevention efforts. The measures taken by the new Center will:

- Enhance the ability of New York State to better serve those who encounter the youth justice system.

- Allow, through a participatory approach, youth and families to define ‘success’ and ‘thriving’ measures.
- Support the Transformative Justice Hubs in developing an innovative learning community of best practices and resources that can serve as a model for other jurisdictions in New York.

In 2024, DCJS entered a Memorandum of Understanding with the University at Albany on behalf of the Youth Justice Institute for the purpose of establishing the YFACTS Data Center. Additional programming will continue in 2025 as the Transformative Youth Justice Hubs are implemented.

Mini-Grants

To advance its current strategic plan, the JJAG approved funding for direct service programming to support youth, families and communities throughout NYS. In October of 2024, DCJS released a bid request to support 15 grants in the amount of \$50,000 each for community-based organizations to improve services and support for justice-involved youth and families. Funding supported six programs in New York City and nine in rest of state, across the following areas:

- trauma, healing, and mental health services
- network of peer workgroups for justice involved youth and their caregivers
- restorative justice and restorative practices
- family and community centered prevention programs; “activism”, listening circles, and community engagement
- credible messengers
- school-based programming; increased literacy and decrease in disciplinary incidents and reduce chronic absenteeism among youth of color
- community-trust building and healing
- culturally competent and dual language speaking mentors and therapists
- positive youth development opportunities

Programming will operate October 1, 2024 through September 30, 2025.

The JJAG approved the following grant awards in 2024:

PROJECTS	AWARD
Transformative Youth Justice Hubs (4 Hubs)	\$4,000,000
Youth, Family, and Community Toward Success (YFACTS) Data Center	\$1,500,000
JJAG Youth Action Committee	\$200,000
Mini-Grants	\$750,000
Elevating Healing and Advancing Equity Conference	\$300,000