

# SECTION F: REDUCING VIOLENCE AND PROVIDING A SECOND CHANCE FOR DISCONNECTED BOYS AND YOUNG MEN OF COLOR



## ABOUT THIS PLAYBOOK

Reducing Violence and Providing a Second Chance for Disconnected Boys and Young Men of Color is one section of the “Opportunity Youth Playbook: A Guide to Reconnecting Boys and Young Men of Color to Education and Employment.”

The playbook highlights promising practices, strategies, and resources to help My Brother’s Keeper communities support boys and young men of color aged 16 to 24 years old who are neither in school nor employed. Such young people—commonly referred to as “opportunity youth” or “disconnected youth”—have distinct talents and needs, and require dedicated strategies beyond those targeted at boys and young men of color more generally. This playbook provides tips for taking action, shares relevant research, lists key organizations and resources, and spotlights effective programs and policies across the county.

The information and recommendations were compiled from a literature review, written comments submitted by national experts, and feedback provided by Opportunity Youth Network participants during an online meeting.

The full playbook is organized by the six critical milestones enshrined by the White House’s My Brother’s Keeper Community Challenge: entering school ready to learn; reading at grade level by third grade; graduating from high school ready for college and career; completing postsecondary education or training; successfully entering the workforce; and reducing violence and providing a second chance.

Access the full playbook, along with the Playbook Companion which provides additional links to key organizations and resources, at <http://forumfyi.org/OYN-MBK-Toolkit>.

# OVERVIEW

Not only do disconnected boys and young men of color deserve a second chance, but many also never really had a first chance.

Genes, environment, and experiences work in concert to impact behavior. Recent research has revealed that important changes in brain function, especially in regard to impulse control and forward planning, occur not only in childhood but also among those in their late teens and early 20s.<sup>1</sup> Most young people are raised in supportive families living in safe neighborhoods that afford them opportunities to bounce back from the types of mistakes and “youthful indiscretions” that are a normative part of brain maturation.

But many disconnected boys and young men of color have not been so lucky. Many have grown up in families and communities that compound rather than mitigate youthful missteps. Many have already faced more challenges and traumatic experiences than a typical adult faces in his or her entire lifetime. Too often they live in communities with high levels of poverty, punitive punishment, the effects of mass incarceration, and exposure to violence.<sup>2</sup> Not only do such environments contribute to disconnection, but they also make reconnection considerably more difficult.

More than 37 percent of black children and almost 32 percent of Hispanic children live in poverty, compared to 12 percent of white children.<sup>3</sup> American-Indian/Alaskan-Natives are more likely than any other racial group to be incarcerated for school-related and status offenses (such as truancy and alcohol consumption) by state courts.<sup>4</sup>

Too often, disconnected young men of color live in communities that have been devastated by the mass incarceration of men of color, housing a large number of individuals who have returned from correctional facilities unable to access student loans to pursue an education, or public benefits like housing and gainful employment, because of their prior conviction.

## VOICES

Where do you feel safe?

*“Well I feel safe in the hallway in my house... Because it’s dangerous outside and in my room because they shoot. And one time I heard one, like it was flying by the window, because they were shooting from very far back at somebody else that was very far back, so they have to shoot up and I live in a building that’s high. That’s why I feel safe in the hallway.”*

*Source: Zusman, A. The Griots of Oakland: Voices from the African-American Oral History Project. Oakland: Story for All, page 127*

## VOICES

What is the scariest thing that ever happened to you?

*“Most scariest thing that ever happened to me was staring down the barrier of a Glock 18 with a whole 30 on it asking ‘Where you from, who is you’ just ‘case I’m walking down the wrong street.”*

*“I’ve seen a couple people get shot. Just seeing death. I mean, it wasn’t nothing to be scared of, but you shouldn’t see it. You shouldn’t see it live, in the face, until it’s you, you get what I am saying? So, those – just basic, in the flesh, in the moment, ohmigod type of scare, it just – it ain’t right.”*

*Source: Zusman, A. The Griots of Oakland: Voices from the African-American Oral History Project. Oakland: Story for All, pages 60 and 62.*



Disconnected boys and young men of color are also more likely than their peers to be victims of homicide and other violent crimes.<sup>5</sup> Black youth are more likely than their white counterparts to witness violence—even controlling for household income.<sup>6</sup> Exposure to violence has immediate negative impacts on educational outcomes, and positive effects on deviant and aggressive behavior, depression, and anxiety.<sup>7</sup> It also has long-term impacts: both direct and indirect exposure puts young people at a high risk for health and social problems throughout their lives.<sup>8</sup>

## SECOND-CHANCE SYSTEMS

In addition to the types of risky decisions that are a normal part of adolescent development, disconnected boys and young men of color are faced with a challenging family and community environment and a series of violent and traumatic experiences. Therefore, it comes as little surprise that they end up in homeless shelters, the foster care system, and the juvenile justice systems. Too often, these systems push young people away from, rather than toward, a productive adulthood.

- Boys and young men of color are disproportionately represented in the justice system, and are more likely than white youth to be detained and given long sentences.<sup>9</sup> Those who are incarcerated are frequently exposed to overcrowded facilities, physical and sexual violence, and trauma.<sup>10</sup> More than 65 percent of young people involved with the juvenile justice system have mental health disorders—and upward of 30 percent have severe mental health disorders.<sup>11</sup> Youth returning from the justice system are much more likely than their peers to be disconnected from education and employment, which leaves them at a high risk of re-offending. Effective violence prevention efforts must be implemented, with a particular emphasis on helping disconnected youth reconnect to jobs and school.
- More than 22,000 young people age out of the child welfare system each year without a permanent connection to an adult or a family.<sup>12</sup> More than 67 percent of young people transitioning out of foster care identify as a racial minority.<sup>13</sup> Young people who age out of foster care are significantly less likely to be employed, graduate from high school, or attend or complete college. They are significantly more likely to be arrested, incarcerated, and/or experience periods of homelessness.<sup>14</sup>
- On any night, more than 46,000 youth can be found living on the streets throughout the United States. Every year, almost two million young people experience at least one night of homelessness.<sup>15</sup> Youth experiencing homelessness are often victims of abuse, neglect, trauma, sexual exploitation, and poverty.<sup>16</sup> Young people who have experienced homelessness are 87 percent more likely than their peers to stop going to school.<sup>17</sup>

Leaders should provide targeted interventions for specific vulnerable subpopulations of disconnected boys and young men of color, including those who have been involved with the juvenile justice system, are in foster care or have recently aged out, are experiencing homelessness, and identify as LGBTQ.

### VOICES

*“At eight years old, I had a good life ... till my father passed away. Then my mother became depressed... I think it impacted me a lot because he died by overdose in front of us so I think it impacted us, me and my brother a lot. Because I think sometime my mama would blame us for that. So yeah it impacted me a lot... Me and my brother went into the system. My mother got us back after like five years or so. I think right there was the deep journey where I disconnected myself, like I fell down... I don't know how to explain it. I felt lost. Like I went to eight different foster cares in all. Me and my brother separated.... The whole time, I think I was just struggling with my mother the whole time. I mean by the time she got me out of foster care, my ma just practically told me I ain't need her. You know my mother was struggling so I couldn't really focus at school. You know there was so much in my head going on that I fell down...”*

Source: The Center for Promise at America's Promise Alliance. (2015). *Don't Quit on Me: What Young People Who Left School Say About the Power of Relationships*. Boston: Center for Promise at Tufts University.

# STRATEGIES FOR TAKING ACTION

## REDUCING AND MITIGATING EXPOSURE TO VIOLENCE

### ► TACKLE YOUTH VIOLENCE THROUGH CROSS-AGENCY AND CROSS-SECTOR APPROACHES.

As discussed in this report, in the section “Strategies That Span the Milestones,” it is important to align efforts across government agencies and across sectors for disconnected boys and young men of color. Local leaders should align efforts to build up their communities’ protective factors (such as increasing access to counseling) and minimize risk factors (such as high unemployment rates). For a chart of risk and protective factors across multiple forms of violence, see pp. 8–9 of the report, “[Connecting the Dots](#),” by the CDC. Such alignment often works best when it is tackled as a subtopic within a broader child, youth, and community development planning group, if such a group is already in place. The same is true for eliminating community violence.

In recognition of this, the U.S. Department of Justice launched the [National Forum on Preventing Youth Violence](#), a network of 15 communities and federal agencies—including justice, housing, education, labor, health, and the CDC—collaborating to build the capacity of communities to prevent and reduce youth violence. The National Forum on Preventing Youth Violence advances three principles: multidisciplinary partnerships are key to tackling this complex issue; communities must balance and coordinate their prevention, intervention, enforcement, and re-entry strategies; and data and evidence-driven strategies must inform efforts to reduce youth violence. Access two of the forum’s reports—“[Involving the Philanthropic & Corporate Community in Violence Prevention Planning and Action Guide](#)” and the “[Strategic Planning Toolkit](#)”—to (1) develop a comprehensive plan to address problems that cannot be solved by one agency alone; (2) identify funds and time that can be better spent; (3) build partnerships and data capacity; and (4) develop sustainability strategies.

Likewise, Cities United is helping mayors across the nation to identify solutions to end the cycle of violent deaths of African-American males. Cities United provides technical assistance and resources on “[What Works \(And Doesn’t\) In Violence Prevention](#).” Also, review the recordings of a three-part webinar series on the [Intersection of Structural Racism and Structural Violence: Understanding Implications for Structural Change in Cities](#).

Additionally, it can be helpful to learn from and connect to networks and national place-based initiatives focused on boys and young men of color and opportunity youth. One example is the [Opportunity Works Sites](#), a Social Innovation Fund project spearheaded by Jobs for the Future and The Aspen Forum for Community Solutions. This project seeks to build evidence for effective strategies that reconnect opportunity youth—specifically, boys and young men of color—to education and employment in seven communities.

### ► PROMOTE COMMUNITY POLICING IN COMMUNITIES OF COLOR AND LOW-INCOME COMMUNITIES.

Advocate for community policing by supporting: limited police use of force, engagement of communities as partners, demilitarized local police departments, and sustained and institutionalized best practices and strategies.

In addition to the four briefs mentioned above, you can find the “[Mapping Police Violence](#)” tool, “[Building Momentum from the Ground Up: A Toolkit for Promoting Justice in Policing](#),” and a [sample Mayoral Pledge to End Police Violence](#) on PolicyLink’s webpage. Communities should adopt the 59 recommendations and actions outlined in the “[President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policy Final Report](#).” The report outlines steps to foster trust and legitimacy, policy and oversight, technology and social media, community policing and crime reduction, training and education, and officer wellness and safety.





## FIELD FAVORITES

Cities United is a national movement focused on eliminating the violence in American cities related to African-American men and boys. Cities United highlighted **15 Things Cities Can Do to Stop the Violence**:

1. Build political will to change.
2. Convene a local leadership team.
3. Connect city leaders in a national network.
4. Engage African-American men and boys from the most affected neighborhoods in community conversations to develop sustainable solutions.
5. Create broad, citywide work groups.
6. Be systematic about targeting resources where they are most needed.
7. Construct and implement a data-driven, multi-year plan of action.
8. Develop an integrated response strategy.
9. Ensure a quality education for every child.
10. Incorporate workforce readiness into all strategies.
11. Provide community-wide mental health services.
12. Engage and support parents and families.
13. Strengthen the skills needed to stop the cycle of violence.
14. Support juvenile- and criminal-justice reforms.
15. Keep the lights on.

**Violence Victimization Trends, Patterns and Consequence for Black Males** is part one of a three part series of reports from Cities United. The report highlights violence trends and patterns, the associated economic costs and the role violence plays in aggression, education, mental and behavior health, and cyclic disadvantage among black males.

Violence trends uplifted in the report include:

- Rates of fatal offending and victimization show stark disparities for young black males, although gaps have narrowed since rates peaked in the early 1990s.
- Black males are significantly more likely than other males to be non-fatally violence victimized and the likelihood is most pronounced for young black males.
- Rates of fatal and nonfatal violent victimization are far higher for young black males living in neighborhoods of high disadvantage.
- When violently victimized black males are substantially more likely to be assaulted with a firearm or other weapon.
- Black youth are substantially more likely to witness serious violence compared to their white counterparts, and household income does not appear to buffer against the risk of exposure.
- Risk of violent victimization among black males is concentrated and transmitted through social networks.

Be on the lookout for Cities United's upcoming release of part two and three of the report series:

- Part Two: Explaining and Predicting Violence Perpetration Among Young Black Males in America
- Part Three: Interventions for Reducing Violence and its Consequences for Young Black Males in America





**PROMOTE EQUITY IN DISCIPLINE AND DISMANTLE THE SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE.**

The inequitable administration and enforcement of school-related exclusionary discipline practices, such as suspensions and expulsion, experienced by students of color—especially those with disabilities and that identify as LGBTQ—is not only unjust but ineffective. Exclusionary discipline policies do not address the root cause of misbehaviors and do more harm than good. Students who are suspended and expelled are more likely to fail a grade, disconnect from school, and become involved in the juvenile justice system.<sup>18</sup> The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Justices and the U.S. Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention’s School-Justice Partnership Project focus on improving collaboration among mental health specialists, law enforcement, and juvenile justice officials to keep students in school and out of the justice system. The [School-Justice Partnership National Resource Center](#) provides models, research, tools, and webinars for (1) schools and educators; (2) law enforcement and school resource officers—law enforcement assigned to a long-term placement and trained to provide security and crime prevention services in school settings; (3) juvenile justice practitioners; (4) mental and behavioral health providers; and (5) school-justice partnerships.<sup>19</sup>

View the U.S Department of Education’s “[Guiding Principles: A Resource Guide for Improving School Climate and Discipline](#)” for action steps to: develop a positive school environment and focus on prevention; develop clear, appropriate, and consistent expectations and consequences to address disruptive student behaviors; and ensure fairness, equity, and continuous improvement. For more information on federal initiatives aimed at discipline equity and improving the school-justice climate (including the [National Clearinghouse on Supportive School Discipline](#) and the U.S. Department of Education [School Climate and Discipline webpage](#)), visit the School-Justice Partnership Federal Initiatives page of the resource guide.

**IDENTIFY EVIDENCE-INFORMED AND EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAMS AND PRACTICES TO ADDRESS CRIME, JUVENILE DELINQUENCY, PREVENTION, AND CHILD SAFETY.**

A good starting place to learn about key issues, reform trends, and resources and to access a glossary related to evidence-based practices in the juvenile justice field is the Juvenile Justice Information Exchange’s “[Resource Hub: Evidence-Based Practices](#).” You can also explore the [CrimeSolutions.gov](#) database for effective justice-related programs and practices. Additionally, the [What Works in Reentry Clearinghouse](#) database rates the effectiveness of a wide range of re-entry programs and practices.

**PROVIDE MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS AND ADDRESS EXPOSURE TO TOXIC STRESS USING TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE.**

When young people experience regular and/or strong adverse experiences—such as exposure to violence, the death of loved ones, abuse, neglect, economic hardship, and homelessness—without protective relationships, a toxic stress response occurs in their body.<sup>20</sup> These adverse experiences disrupt brain and organ development and function, with the potential for lifelong ramifications including developmental delays,

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) describes a trauma-informed approach as:

A program, organization, or system that:

- Realizes the widespread impact of trauma and understands potential paths for recovery;
- Recognizes the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system;
- Responds by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices; and
- Seeks to actively resist re-traumatization.

A trauma-informed approach can be implemented in any type of service setting or organization and is distinct from trauma-specific interventions or treatments that are designed specifically to address the consequences of trauma and to facilitate healing.

For key principles of a trauma-informed approach and different types of trauma-specific intervention models visit [SAMHSA’s National Center for Trauma-Informed Care and Alternatives to Seclusion and Restraint \(NCTIC\)](#).

heart disease, substance abuse, depression, and diabetes. The good news is that science has found that positive environments and supportive and consistent relationships with caring adults can both prevent and reverse the negative effects of prolonged exposure to stress.<sup>21</sup>

Since the education system touches every child at one point or another, schools can be a particularly effective place to ensure young people have the types of supports and consistent relationships that buffer toxic stress and prevent disconnection. [Turnaround for Children](#) works with high-poverty schools to build student support teams (made up of teachers, administrators, and social workers) that build individualized plans for students and track behavioral, emotional, and academic progress. The organization provides teacher and staff training in strategies that create safe, nurturing, engaging classrooms and teach students development skills such as self-regulation.

When disconnected boys and young men of color come into contact with other public systems, since they are not in school, it is critical that they interface with staff who provide trauma-informed care and can direct them to the mental health supports they need. The National Clearinghouse on Families and Youth created a free online training course on [Trauma-Informed Care](#). The four modules are geared to help families and youth workers recognize trauma and address traumatic stress through customized supports. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s (SAMHSA) National Center for Trauma-Informed Care and Alternatives to Seclusion and Restraint highlights various [trauma-specific interventions](#) designed for criminal justice, mental health, substance abuse, shelters, and residential treatment settings.

[“Safe, Healthy, and Ready to Learn: Policy Recommendations to Ensure Children Thrive in Supportive Communities Free from Violence and Trauma,”](#) a report by Futures Without Violence, highlights seven goals associated with preventing and addressing childhood exposure to violence and trauma. Another report, [“Investing in Boys and Young Men of Color: The Promise and Opportunity,”](#) by the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP), provides recommendations and action steps to increase the cultural competency of health professionals and educators, and to change the philosophy and culture of how youth systems provide services to youth experiencing violence and trauma. Additionally, another CLASP brief, [“Investing in Young Men of Color as Community Assets,”](#) describes policy levers that leaders can advocate for and adopt to improve the well-being of boys and men of color.

The report [“Safe, Healthy, and Ready to Learn: Policy Recommendations to Ensure Children Thrive in Supportive Communities Free from Violence and Trauma, by Futures without Violence,”](#) highlights seven goals associated with preventing and addressing childhood exposure to violence and trauma. Read the full report to view the following policy recommendations.

1. Invest early in parents and young children.
2. Help schools promote positive school climates, be trauma-sensitive, and raise achievement.
3. Train educators, health care workers, and other child-serving professionals about preventing and responding to youth violence and trauma.
4. Prevent violence and trauma.
5. Improve intra- and intergovernmental coordination and alignment.
6. Increase the availability of trauma-informed service for children and families.
7. Increase public awareness and knowledge of childhood violence and trauma





## FIELD FAVORITES

The Center for Law and Social Policy's brief, "[Investing in Young Men of Color as Community Assets](#)," highlights strategies and policy recommendations that local, state, and federal officials can follow to meet basic needs, expand behavioral and mental health supports, and improve well-being among boys and men of color.

**Take full advantage of Affordable Care Act (ACA) implementation at the federal and state levels to improve health equity and access, and to expand mental and behavioral services to young men of color.**

**Ensure access to health and behavioral health services through Medicaid.**

- Every state should enact the ACA Medicaid expansion.
- In expansion states, policymakers and advocates should address the most crucial needs for youth of color and their communities, including behavioral health services, and break down barriers to delivering high-quality services.
- Youth development, workforce, education, child welfare, and Medicaid staff, and relevant community partners should be trained in Medicaid enrollment and outreach strategies for young men of color, and should teach them how to use—not just enroll in— their new health care coverage.
- States should ensure that current foster youth remain enrolled in Medicaid through automated systems as they age out of the system without having to take action or provide verification. Proactive outreach strategies should be implemented to identify youth under 26 who have aged out.
- States should take the option to enroll youth who aged out of foster care in another state.
- States should tailor the benefits package to the needs of vulnerable youth, including those aging out of foster care.
- States should adopt 12-month continuous eligibility for Medicaid for children, youth, and adults.

**Embed trauma-informed practices into all youth-serving systems to improve health outcomes among young men of color.**

- Utilize preventive health care approaches that recognize the impact of neighborhood environmental factors on the physical and mental health of males of color, including how those environments can prevent access to health services.
- Use behavioral health screening and assessment tools to identify where and how to intervene with children and youth as soon as trauma occurs.
- Engage training and employment programs infused with trauma-informed supportive services as part of preparing young men for meaningful employment.
- Use rehabilitative options within the juvenile justice system that focus on addressing trauma to divert youth from detention and incarceration.

**Promote economic security for youth and young adults.**

- At the state level, ensure job training and opportunities to make use of Able-Bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWDs) on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known the Food Stamp Program).

View the "[Investing in Young Men of Color as Community Assets](#)" brief for more information on the recommendations listed above and for additional strategies and polices to address: Education Equity: Improving College and Career Readiness and Supporting Dropout Prevention and Recovery; Workforce Development and Training: Investing in Summer and Year-Round Employment; and Public Investment in Young People: Raising the Bar at All Levels of Government.



# SUPPORTING DISCONNECTED BOYS AND YOUNG MEN OF COLOR IN SECOND-CHANCE SYSTEMS

When things go wrong, disconnected boys and young men of color need and deserve a second chance—to make better decisions, to have supportive parents and to have a roof over their heads. Yet far too often, the systems designed to provide these second chances repeatedly fail. These young men are frequently mistreated by the justice system. Appallingly high numbers age out of the foster care system each year with no plan for what comes next, and many are forced to live on the streets.

## SUPPORTING DISCONNECTED BOYS AND YOUNG MEN OF COLOR INVOLVED IN THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

### ► ADVOCATE FOR FEDERAL POLICY REFORM, INCLUDING THE RE-AUTHORIZATION OF THE JUVENILE JUSTICE AND DELINQUENCY PREVENTION ACT (JJDP A).

The federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP A) outlines [four core protections](#) and minimum standards for the safety of youth coming into contact with the justice system. The core protections ensure that disconnected young men of color: are not held in adult jails when they are not charged as adults; have “sight and sound” separation from adult prisoners when charged as adults; are placed in community-based alternatives and not held in confinement when charged as adults; and do not disproportionately come in contact with the justice system. Act 4 Juvenile Justice (Act 4JJ) is a campaign launched by the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Coalition (JJDP C) to share [policy recommendations for further](#) strengthening the JJDP A.

### ► COLLECT AND TRACK DATA DISAGGREGATED BY GENDER, RACE, ETHNICITY, AND OFFENSE, AND IMPLEMENT PLANS TO MINIMIZE DISPROPORTIONATE MINORITY CONTACT ACROSS DIFFERENT POINTS OF INTERACTION IN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM.

The JJDP A requires states to address disproportionate minority contact (DMC) at nine decision points within the juvenile justice system. Currently, the legislation does very little to provide specificity or guidance on how states should track and reduce racial and ethnic disparities. Data collection is inconsistent across the country, especially for Latinos who are often counted as white or black. This underscores the need to collect data on ethnicity as well as race.

Act 4JJ’s [Fact Sheet: Disproportionate Minority Contact](#) outlines six steps to develop data-driven strategies and inclusive collaboratives. The fact sheet highlights five counties that have begun to reduce DMC, including Baltimore County. This county reduced “by fifty percent the secure detention of African-American youth resulting from bench warrants due to failing to appear in court by instituting a reminder call program.” Santa Cruz County, California, reduced “disproportionate admissions to detention of Latino youth by focusing on reducing admissions for youth who were initially detained by Probation but released by the Judge at first appearance.”<sup>22</sup>

### ► ADVOCATE AND SUPPORT STATUS OFFENSE SYSTEM REFORM AND PROMOTE THE USE OF COMMUNITY-BASED ALTERNATIVES TO INCARCERATION.

The American Youth Policy Forum’s brief, [Connecticut Post-Secondary Pathways for Opportunity Youth](#), is a case study that describes lessons learned and promising practices, and provides infographics on how the state is addressing opportunity youth. The profile does a deep dive on justice-involved youth on p. 9, in the section Juvenile Reentry: A Critical Point on the Pathway to Postsecondary Opportunities. The profile highlights reforms the state has taken to minimize the interactions of opportunity youth with the justice system, including reducing out-of-home placement for juveniles; addressing school-based arrests; and providing counseling, behavioral therapy, and substance abuse treatment.

The [Status Offense Reform Center’s toolkit](#) provides step-by-step guidance on how leaders can improve the treatment of young people charged with status offenses. The toolkit’s four sections are: [Structuring System Change](#).

[Using Local Information to Guide System Change](#), [Planning and Implementing System Change](#), and [Monitoring and Sustaining System Change](#). Community-based alternatives or diversion programs reduce young people’s interaction with the justice system. For more information on key issues, resources, and best practices, visit the Juvenile Justice Information Exchange’s [“Resource Hub: Community-Based Alternatives.”](#) Additionally, take a look at the [“National Standards for the Care of Youth Charged with Status Offenses”](#) and [“Improving Responses to Youth Charged with Status Offenses: A Training Curriculum,”](#) by the Coalition for Juvenile Justice.

► **ENSURE PRACTICES AND POLICIES IN THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM ARE DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE AND TRAUMA-INFORMED.**

[Models for Changing Juvenile Justice in a Development Framework: A 2015 Status Report](#) provides developmentally appropriate best practices in nine juvenile justice policy areas: status offense rules, age limits for juvenile court jurisdiction, transfer to adult court, access to counsel, competency to stand trial, courtroom shackling, solitary confinement, juvenile records, and sex offender registration. The report also highlights states that have been taken to incorporate best practices into legislation. The [Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention’s Model Program Guide](#) is a U.S. Department of Justice database of evidence-based programs highlighting what works and what does not, as well as promising programs. Also, view the National Children Traumatic Stress Network’s [“Essential Elements of a Trauma-Informed Juvenile Justice System,”](#) which provides guidelines, tools, and information to implement elements of a trauma-informed juvenile justice system.

► **SHIFT TO A BALANCED AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE APPROACH.**

A Balanced and Restorative Justice (BARJ) approach requires offenders to make amends, develop competencies, and work collaboratively with victims and the community to ensure safety and protection. View the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention’s [“Guide for Implementing the Balanced and Restorative Justice \(BARJ\) Model.”](#) The guide, put out by the Department of Justice, highlights key competencies, challenges associated with the model, promising examples, stakeholder roles, and more.

► **PROVIDE PROGRAMMING AND SUPPORTS TO DISCONNECTED BOYS AND YOUNG MEN OF COLOR IN CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES.**

Disconnected boys and young men of color in the justice system need educational supports, mentoring, counseling, and career training.<sup>23</sup> Comprehensive programming should cultivate positive development and create an easier transition to reentry programs—and ultimately self-sufficiency—once the young person leaves a facility.<sup>24</sup> Access the Departments of Education and Justice’s [“Guiding Principles of Providing High-Quality Education Juvenile Justice Secure Care Settings”](#) for core activities agencies can adopt to promote education outcomes for young people in the justice system.

YouthBuild USA led a nine-site pilot, Start Making a Real Transformation (SMART), which targeted exclusively court-involved opportunity youth before they were released. Pilot participants had an extraordinarily low recidivism rate of 1 percent. SMART is based on the nine core elements of the YouthBuild model: caring staff, leadership development, community service, counseling, postsecondary education and vocational training, post-program placement and graduate support, individualized service delivery, retention incentives, and customized re-entry planning. SMART built on these elements to create best practices to reduce recidivism. [Life after Lockup](#) shares results of the pilot and key features such as leadership councils, flexible programming, relationships with correctional facilities, trauma training, and mental health services.

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**YouthBuild’s SMART pilot key features included in [Life after Lockup](#) are:**

- caring staff
- leadership development
- community service
- counseling
- postsecondary education and vocational training
- postprogram placement and graduate support
- individualized service delivery
- retention incentives
- customized re-entry planning

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Additionally, the U.S. Department of Justice’s [“Roadmap to Reentry”](#) highlights five evidence-based principles to guide correctional facilities’ efforts to provide a smooth transition to life after incarceration. The principles are: (1) upon incarceration, provide every inmate with an individualized re-entry plan tailored to his or her risk of recidivism and programmatic needs; (2) while incarcerated, ensure that every inmate participates in programs targeting education, employment training, life skills, substance abuse, and mental health, as well as other programs that target their criminogenic needs and maximize their likelihood of success upon release; (3) while incarcerated, supply each inmate with the resources and opportunity to build and maintain family relationships and strengthen the support system available to them upon release; (4) during transition back to the community, ensure that halfway houses and supervised release programs provide individualized continuity of care for returning citizens; and (5) before leaving custody, furnish every inmate with comprehensive re-entry-related information and access to resources necessary to succeed in the community.

► **FORM CROSS-SYSTEM COLLABORATIONS AND PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN THE JUSTICE SYSTEM AND OTHER AGENCIES INCLUDING WORKFORCE, MENTAL HEALTH, PUBLIC HOUSING, ARTS AND CULTURE, AND HIGHER EDUCATION TO MEET THE COMPREHENSIVE NEEDS OF DISCONNECTED YOUNG MEN OF COLOR.**

As discussed in the “Strategies that Span the Milestones” section of this report, it is important to align efforts across government agencies and sectors. Such alignment often works best when tackled as a subtopic within a broader development planning group targeting children, youth, and the community, if such a group is already in place. It is important for such collaborations to include the justice system. An example of an innovative partnership with a correctional facility is the [MontgomeryWorks Correctional Facility-Based One-Stop Career Center](#) in Montgomery County, Maryland. A part of their Reentry for All initiative, the program is a partnership between the local Workforce Investment Board and Department of Correction and Rehabilitation. Similar to other One-Stop Centers, individuals can access employment-related services like mock interviews, workshops on job readiness and job search skills, and other comprehensive supports inside the facility. Another example is the collaboration between the Los Angeles County Arts Commission and the county probation department to offer programming in the arts and to engage ex-offenders in the creative workforce.

Case managers, probation officers, counselors, and other stakeholders should foster relationships and develop partnerships to create a seamless transition to external supports. Learn more about cross-system models that serve justice-involved or at-risk young people. Some of these are discussed in the paper, [“Trauma-Informed Collaborations among Juvenile Justice and Other Child-Serving Systems: An Update,”](#) by the Center for Trauma Recovery and Juvenile Justice. The models are the [Georgetown University Crossover Youth Practice Model \(CYPM\)](#), [Trauma Systems Therapy \(TST\)](#), the Positive Student Engagement Model for School Policing, the [Child Development Community Policing \(CDCP\) Program](#), and the [Stark County Traumatized Child Task Force](#).

Public housing agencies play a critical role in re-entry. Communities such as King County, Washington; Burlington, Vermont; and New York City have created re-entry programs that have strong partnerships with nonprofits, local elected officials, correctional facilities, parole/probation and police departments, and other stakeholders. Learn about the core elements of public housing re-entry programs, three applicable models, and the key steps to designing a successful re-entry program in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development toolkit, [“It Starts with Housing: Public Housing Agencies Are Making Second Chances Real.”](#)

► **REDUCE RECIDIVISM BY ADOPTING REHABILITATIVE MODELS AND BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTIONS TO HELP RECONNECT YOUNG MEN OF COLOR RELEASED FROM THE JUSTICE SYSTEM TO EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT PATHWAYS.**

Youth returning from the justice system are much more likely than their peers to be disconnected from education and employment. This, in turn, leaves them at high risk of reoffending. This vicious cycle should be addressed head on by helping to reconnect young offenders back to school and jobs. Adopt strategies from [“Making the Right Turn: A Guide about Improving Transition Outcomes for Youth Involved in the Juvenile Correction Systems.”](#) Chapter 4 of the guide highlights promising practices for youth involved in the justice system—including strategies for employment

and training, behavioral interventions, and rehabilitative models. The Juvenile Justice Information Exchange’s [Resource Hub: Re-entry](#) provides a wealth of resources on core principles of reentry, employment and education, mental health, substance abuse, and reconnecting with families.

Encourage higher education institutions and employers to make a commitment to remove barriers to college and employment access, and to provide a second chance to young people who are justice-involved by taking the [Fair Chance Higher Education Pledge](#) and the [Fair Chance Business Pledge](#).

► **SUPPORT AND UTILIZE NATIONAL SERVICE AND CONSERVATION CORPS.**

The Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) manages AmeriCorps, which engages young people in service at organizations across the county. The newly formed [Youth Opportunity AmeriCorps](#) enrolls formerly incarcerated youth and those at-risk of being incarcerated in national service projects. Additionally, [The Corps Network](#) leads and supports over 130 corps (comprehensive youth development programs that engage 16- to 25-year-olds in service projects, job training, and academic programming). The Corps Network offers a wealth of resources, including the guide, “[Civic Justice Corps: Transforming Reentry Through Service](#)” and the “[Civic Justice Corps Toolkit](#),” which outlines a model to support successful re-entry and diversion through service projects.

## SUPPORTING DISCONNECTED BOYS AND YOUNG MEN OF COLOR IN, OR RECENTLY AGED OUT FROM, THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM

► **PREVENT YOUTH FROM BECOMING DISCONNECTED WHEN THEY AGE OUT OF THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM BY LEVERAGING RESEARCH ON BRAIN DEVELOPMENT, YOUTH PERMANENCE, AND EXTENDED FOSTER CARE.**

The Success by 18 Campaign leverages [expertise in and research](#) on adolescent brain development, older youth permanence, extended foster care, and the Opportunity Passport initiative. The campaign highlights commonsense solutions that have the potential to reduce the number of foster youth who become disconnected, increasing their personal and financial assets. The Jim Casey Youth Opportunities Initiative is a national and state-based effort to ensure every young person leaving foster care has the family connections, opportunities, and support needed for a successful transition to adulthood. Use the “[Site Implementation Toolkit](#)” to adopt the initiative’s core strategies in your community.

► **ADOPT CROSS-SYSTEM APPROACHES TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF YOUTH TRANSITIONING OUT OF FOSTER CARE.**

As discussed in the “Strategies that Span the Milestones” section of this report, it is important to align efforts across government agencies and sectors for disconnected boys and young men of color. Such alignment often works best when it is tackled as a subtopic within a broader community development planning group that focuses on children, youth, and the community, if such a group is already in place. The child welfare system must be a strong partner in such efforts. State agencies like education, welfare, justice, and labor should work together to identify gaps in support for multisystem youth and coordinate efforts to eliminate them. A National Governors Association’s report, “[The Transition to Adulthood: How States Can Support Older Youth in Foster Care](#),” outlines five strategies and recommendations for state governments: promote educational attainment; connect youth with employment and





career training; enhance access to safe and affordable housing; help youth access and manage health care; and aid youth in building stable, lifelong relationships. Learn more about the Georgetown University Center for Juvenile Justice Reform's Crossover Youth Practice Model, which targets young people engaged with both the child welfare and justice systems. These youths are often referred to as "dual-involved" or "cross-over." The goals of this model include reducing: the number of young people placed in out-of-home care, the number of young people crossing over from the welfare system into the justice system, and the disproportionate representation of young people of color in congregate care (group homes or group living institutions). Guidance for practitioners to improve collaboration between the child welfare and justice systems can be found in Models for Change's "[Guidebook for Juvenile Justice and Children Welfare Systems Coordinating and Integration](#)," as well as "[From Conversation to Collaboration: How Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Agencies Can Work Together to Improve Outcomes for Dual Status Youth](#)."

## ► INVEST IN THE SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, AND PHYSICAL WELL-BEING OF OLDER YOUTH IN FOSTER CARE.

"[Well-Being of Older Youth in Foster Care](#)" provides a framework whose six domains are: intellectual potential, social development, mental wellness, physical health, safety and permanency, and economic success. One of five investment strategies outlined in the guide is Invest in Improving, Expanding, and Sustaining Innovative and Evidence-Informed Practices. This approach concentrates on functional assessment tools, effective practice models, children of immigrant families, and vulnerable populations (LGBTQ, Native-American, justice-involved, disabled, parenting, and pregnant youth), as well as professional development and implementation.



## FIELD FAVORITES

**Connected by 25: A Plan for Investing in the Social, Emotional and Physical Well-Being of Older Youth in Foster Care** stresses the importance of Investing in Improving, Expanding, and Sustaining Innovative and Evidence-Informed Practices (page 22). The excerpt below highlights how effective practice models (defined in the report as “values, principles, relationships, approaches and techniques used at the system and casework practitioner level to enable children and families to achieve the goals of safety, stability, permanency and well-being”) and professional development can help ensure that practices in the foster care system promote social, emotional and physical well-being of opportunity youth.

Practice models need to ensure well-being in a broad sense, including reflecting the critical interconnection between social, emotional and physical well-being and permanency and safety. New investments are needed to enhance the focus on well-being within existing practice models while also creatively designing and testing innovative new models of case management, supervision and administration. Such models would:

- Value youth engagement and increase opportunities for youth to develop and practice (and to safely fail) self-advocacy, problem-solving and other skills needed for lifelong social, emotional and physical well-being.
- Strongly emphasize lifelong family connections and the role of family in supporting the well-being of older youth and young adults through the development of practice approaches to engage birth families in their children’s lives; to effectively support kinship involvement in academic, health, mental health, social and other settings; to strengthen sibling connections and provide for intensive family-search and family-finding efforts to ensure better linkages between the permanency and well-being outcomes for youth.
- Understand and employ developmentally appropriate strategies that recognize the changing strengths, characteristics and needs of adolescents and young adults.
- Utilize a team-planning and decision-making process with the inclusion of cross-discipline team members with expertise in areas of social, emotional and physical well-being.

Investments that support enhanced and ongoing professional development of those working with older youth and young adults are urgently needed. Priority investments include:

- Developing competency-based training for workers, supervisors and care givers.
- Ongoing coaching and mentoring to develop expertise among the child welfare workforce and caregivers.
- Support for effective management practices, including setting reasonable caseloads.
- Evidence-supported approaches such as reflective supervision.
- Recognition and addressing of secondary trauma in the workforce and among caregivers.

Youth Transition Funder’s Group (YTFG) is a network of grantmakers whose mission is to help all youth make a successful transition to adulthood by age 25. YTFG’s Foster Care Work Group (FCWG) works to ensure youth in foster care have lifelong family, personal and community connections and the opportunities and tools to succeed throughout adulthood. For more information, including their latest report **Investing to Improve the Well-Being of Vulnerable Youth and Young Adults: Recommendations for Policy and Practices** visit the **FCWG webpage**.



## ► USE A RACE AND GENDER LENS.

The Center for the Study of Social Policy's (CSSP's) [Alliance for Racial Equity in Child Welfare](#) offers a wealth of resources. Among them is the brief, "[Strategies to Reduce Racially Disparate Outcomes in Child Welfare](#)," which includes examples from across the country of agencies changing operational structures to advance racial equity and foster formal partnerships with tribal governments. Other CSSP reports are "[Understanding the Intersection of Race, Housing and Child Welfare](#)" webinar, a "[Racial Equity Child Welfare Data Analysis Tool](#)," and "[Improving Outcomes for African-American Males Involved with Child Welfare Systems](#)." The last report provides information on the current status of African-Americans in the child welfare system. It outlines effective approaches to improve outcomes: (1) establish an overarching organizational commitment to race equity embedded in the agency's vision, mission, values, and operations; (2) understand and respond to the complex ways in which structural racism shapes the experiences and well-being of young men of color, including both implicit bias and explicit forms of racism; (3) create ways for the voices, aspirations, and input of young men of color to be visible and influential in all aspects of programming and accountability; and (4) reinforce and sustain the work by making permanent structural and systemic changes using a results focus in service delivery, data collection and accountability, administrative infrastructure, and human resource development.

# SUPPORTING DISCONNECTED BOYS AND YOUNG MEN OF COLOR EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

## ► CREATE AND IMPLEMENT A COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY PLAN TO END YOUTH HOMELESSNESS.

Places like Connecticut and King County in Washington State have created action plans to address youth homelessness. Take a look at the "[Comprehensive Plan to Prevent and End Youth and Young Adult Homelessness in King County by 2020](#)" and "[Opening Doors for Youth: An Action Plan to Provide all Connecticut Youth and Young Adults with Safe, Stable Homes and Opportunity](#)" to get a sense of what could be included in your community's action plan. Also, view the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness' "[Federal Framework to End Youth Homelessness](#)," which includes strategies for collecting better data and building capacity to improve service delivery.

Ensure that the plan is informed by the voices of young men of color who are currently homeless and/or have been in the past. For example, in 2011 the DC Alliance of Youth Advocates (DCAYA) conducted a survey of youth experiencing homelessness in Washington, DC. The results and an analysis can be found in the report "[From the Streets to Stability: A Study of Youth Homelessness in the District of Columbia](#)." Likewise, the [National Network for Youth](#) (NN4Y) established the [National Youth Advisory Council](#) (NYAC) to connect young people who have run away, been expelled from home, or become disconnected from family with the lawmakers, service providers, and community officials responsible for crafting policy solutions.

## ► ENSURE YOUR COMMUNITY IS EMPLOYING EFFECTIVE STRATEGIES TO RECONNECT HOMELESS BOYS AND YOUNG MEN OF COLOR, INCLUDING RUNAWAY AND TRAFFICKED YOUTH.

Approaches should be appropriate, specific, and targeted at subpopulations. Minors, transition-aged youth, and trafficked youth and adults experiencing homelessness each require the use of different interventions. The National Network for Youth (NN4Y) identifies steps cities can take to prevent and reconnect runaway and homeless youth in the brief, "[What Works to End Youth Homelessness](#)." Communities should implement effective strategies in prevention and outreach to (1) connect youth to services; (2) create drop-in centers to engage youth and link them to community resources; (3) provide shelter to enable youth to take an important first step in getting off the street; (4) consider family engagement and interventions when safe and appropriate; (5) provide youth-appropriate housing programs to build independent living skills; (6) deliver case management to improve wellness and decision-making; (7) connect youth to education to increase future income-earning capability; (8) link youth to workforce development to enable them to compete in the job market; (9) provide culturally competent services; and (10) offer services that respond to survivors of human trafficking. View the National Network for Youth (NN4Y)'s [state and local resources](#) for additional information.

## ► HELP HOMELESS BOYS AND YOUNG MEN OF COLOR STAY IN SCHOOL.

Schools can provide stability, continuity, and opportunities for young men of color experiencing homelessness. High-school staff, the McKinney-Vento Education of Homeless Children and Youth Assistance Act, and homeless liaisons play a critical role in ensuring the educational success of unaccompanied youth (young people not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian). The National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth created the “Unaccompanied Youth Toolkit for High School Counselors and McKinney-Vento Liaisons,” which provides a wealth of information. Included is an overview of the McKinney-Vento Act’s Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program, the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) program, a checklist of how counselors can help identify students experiencing homelessness, tips on how schools and service providers can work together, talking points for positive conversations with young people, information to access services, and training materials.

The National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth’s (NAECHY) primer on [Using What We Know: Supporting the Education of Unaccompanied Homeless Youth](#) outlines seven important principles and strategies for implementation to address barriers to education for young people experience homelessness:

1. Young people’s basic needs must be met if they are to achieve their educational goals.
2. If young people feel that school is a safe and supportive place for them, they will be much more likely to enroll, attend and succeed.
3. More consistent implementation of the McKinney-Vento Act, through increased personnel and uniform procedures, will facilitate the educational attendance and success of youth on their own.
4. When schools adopt flexible policies and programs to accommodate the demands of homelessness and independence, they offer unaccompanied youth an environment where they can be more engaged and successful.
5. Many unaccompanied youth have become disengaged from school and must be drawn back in by caring, persistent adults.
6. Improvements in child welfare policies and practices to reduce the number of youth in the child welfare system who are homeless, and to make supportive services accessible to unaccompanied youth, are essential for youth to achieve their educational goals.
7. Any effort to support unaccompanied youth’s educational success will be more effective if all youth-serving agencies coordinate their efforts, accept joint responsibility for outcomes, and involve young people as active partners.

## ► SUPPORT LGBTQ HOMELESS YOUTH.

As [What Works to End Youth Homelessness](#) notes:

“Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) youth are overrepresented in the homeless population. According to a growing body of research and study, a conservative estimate is that one out of every five homeless youth (20 percent) is LGBT-identified. ... Most LGBT youth become homeless because of family abuse, neglect, or conflict over their identity. Many homeless LGBT youth were kicked out of their homes, while others ran from foster and group homes because they were mistreated or harassed. LGBT youth are not only overrepresented in homeless youth populations, but reports indicate that while living on the streets, LGBT youth are at great risk of physical and sexual exploitation—at the hands of adults, police, and other youth. For example, one study concluded that LGBT homeless youth experience an average of 7.4 more acts of sexual violence than their heterosexual peers. Transgender youth in particular are often harassed, assaulted, and arrested by police because of their gender presentation. Another study found that LGBT youth may have twice the rate of sexual victimization on the streets as non-LGBT homeless youth, and LGBT youth report double the rates of sexual abuse before age 12.3. In addition, LGBT homeless youth are more likely to report being asked by someone on the streets to exchange sex for money, food, drugs, shelter, and clothing than heterosexual homeless youth. Unfortunately, many LGBT homeless youth resort to trading sex to meet their basic needs.”<sup>25</sup>

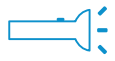


Getting “kicked out [of their home] when they come out [of the closet]” remains a stubbornly persistent phenomenon. Organizations serving vulnerable boys and young men of color should make sure services and supports are welcoming, affirming, and culturally responsive. “[At the Intersections: A Collaborative Resource on LGBTQ Youth Homelessness](#),” developed by the [National LGBTQ Task Force](#) and the [True Colors Fund](#), notes that “Youth experiencing homelessness live at the intersections of various marginalized identities, which may include their race, gender identity and expression, age, sexual orientation, immigration status, ability, and more. The systems meant to serve them—juvenile justice, homelessness, child welfare, health care, immigration, and education—often don’t take into account their specific circumstances, which can result in their needs not being met.”<sup>26</sup>

For example, the brief, “What Works to End Youth Homelessness,” suggests assuming that some of the young people they serve are LGBTQ—even when none of the young people have self-identified or revealed publicly their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Consider the additional barriers faced by young men of color that identify as LGBTQ. The Advocates for Youth brief, “[The Impact of Homophobia and Racism on LGBTQ Youth of Color](#),” shares facts associated with family and societal homophobic environments, homelessness, harassment, and cultural competency needs in education, programs, and health care. View the “[National Recommended Best Practices for Serving LGBT Homeless Youth](#)” for recommendations on: treating LGBTQ youth respectfully and ensuring their safety; appropriately addressing LGBTQ identity during the intake process; supporting access to education, medical care, and mental health care; supporting transgender and gender-nonconforming youth participants; and informing LGBTQ youth participants about local LGBTQ programs and services. The [report](#) also includes recommendations on how leadership can improve organizational culture to implement competent services to LGBTQ youth, as listed below.

- .....
- 
- **Recommendations on how leadership can improve organizational culture to implement competent services to LGBTQ youth. [National Recommended Best Practices for Serving LGBT Homeless Youth](#)**
- 
- 1. Programmatic Culture: Creating a Safe and Inclusive Environment
  - 2. Adopt and Implement Written Nondiscrimination Policies
  - 3. Adopt Confidentiality Policies
  - 4. Provide LGBTQ Competency Training to All Agency Employees and Volunteers
  - 5. Establish Sound Recruitment and Hiring Practices
  - 6. Develop Agency Connections to LGBTQ Organizations and the LGBTQ Community
  - 7. Collect and Evaluate Data
- 
- .....





# PROGRAM SPOTLIGHTS

## YOUTH VILLAGES' YVLIFESET

[Youth Villages' YVLifeSet](#) is an intensive and comprehensive program that works with young people aging out of the foster care system – including those with involvement with the justice system and other vulnerable youth ages 17 to 22 – to successfully transition into adulthood.

Core components of the program include:

- **Intensity.** Small caseloads of eight to 10 young adults per specialist with a minimum of one face-to-face session per week as well as other communication throughout the week.
- **Comprehensive services.** Specialists help youth achieve their goals with education, employment, housing, permanency and basic independent living skills.
- **Youth-driven.** Young adults have input into their service plans, goal development and group activities.
- **Training and supervision.** Staff receive extensive on-the-job training as well as weekly group supervision and consultation with quarterly boosters and other training as needed.
- **Formalized program model.** The program uses evidence-based interventions as clinically necessary.
- **Program evaluation.** Youth Villages checks in with young people six, 12 and 24 months after they've completed the YVLifeSet program.
- **Philosophy.** Youth Villages does whatever it takes. Specialists are expected to achieve success with a high percentage of the young adults; the case outcomes are the specialists' responsibility.
- **Collaboration.** The YVLifeSet program works closely with other support systems to help ensure consistent and effective services are provided.

The program was recently evaluated by MDRC in a randomized controlled study. The study found positive impacts in outcomes around employment and earnings, housing stability, economic well-being and health and safety. View the report, [Youth Villages Transitional Living Program Evaluation](#), for details related to the study results. Also, view this [infographic](#) for a diagram of the key services offered and the results of the study.

## LARKIN STREET YOUTH SERVICES

### SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

[Larkin Street](#) provides youth between the ages of 12 and 24 comprehensive services, including housing, education, employment and health services, to get homeless and at-risk youth off the streets. Larkin Street serves more than 3,000 youth each year, giving them a place where they can feel safe; rebuild their sense of self-respect, trust, and hope; learn school, life and job skills; and find the confidence to build a future.

More than 30 percent of the young people Larkin Street serves are African-American, 16 percent are Latino and 10 percent identify as multiracial. 63 percent are male. Approximately one-third identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. Larkin Street's [Youth Homelessness in San Francisco: 2014 Report on Incidence and Needs](#) describes paths into homelessness, demographics of youth homelessness, service needs as described by the young people themselves and more.



## ROCA

### CHELSEA, REVERE, EAST BOSTON, MALDEN, EVERETT AND SPRINGFIELD, MA

**Roca's** mission is to disrupt the cycle of incarceration and poverty by helping young people transform their lives. A history of relentless outreach on the streets of the most dangerous urban communities has led Roca to develop and operate an evidence-based Intervention Model for High-Risk Young People ages 17 to 24. Providing two years of intensive services with two years of follow-up, the Intervention Model creates sustained behavior change in high-risk young people for whom other programming has failed, helping them break the destructive patterns that leave them continually impoverished, involved in violence, and incarcerated.

**Roca's Intervention Model** is designed for very high-risk young men aged 17-24 who are:

- **aging out of the juvenile justice or juvenile probation systems with a strong propensity for reincarceration as an adult;**
- **connected with the adult justice system; or**
- **are high-risk members of the community being served who have a strong propensity for incarceration as an adult.**

Their **Intervention Model for High-Risk Young People** has four core components:

1. **Relentless Outreach and Follow-Up** – youthworkers relentlessly reconnect with a young person who periodically rejects them and refuses to engage in programming.
2. **Transformational Relationships (TRs)** are the basis of Roca's intensive case management.
3. **Stage-Based Programming** engages young people where they are in the stages of change cognitively and behaviorally.
4. **Engaged Institutions** strategy promotes transformational relationships between organizations and systems.

Learn more about Roca's **positive outcomes** and their recent selection to participating in **Pay for Success/Social Impact Bond** effort. Also, for further information read the Heartland Alliance's **Opportunity Youth Employment Program Case Study: Roca**.

# SUMMARY OF STRATEGIES FOR ACTION

## REDUCING VIOLENCE AND PROVIDING A SECOND CHANCE FOR DISCONNECTED BOYS AND YOUNG MEN OF COLOR

### REDUCING AND MITIGATING EXPOSURE TO VIOLENCE

1. *Tackle youth violence through cross-agency and cross-sector approaches.*
2. *Promote community policing in communities of color and low-income communities.*
3. *Promote equity in discipline and dismantle the school-to-prison pipeline.*
4. *Identify evidence-informed and evidence-based programs and practices to address crime, juvenile delinquency, prevention, and child safety.*
5. *Provide mental health supports and address exposure to toxic stress using trauma-informed care.*

## SUPPORTING DISCONNECTED BOYS AND YOUNG MEN OF COLOR IN SECOND-CHANCE SYSTEMS

### SUPPORTING DISCONNECTED BOYS AND YOUNG MEN OF COLOR INVOLVED IN THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

6. *Advocate for federal policy reform, including the reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP A).*
7. *Collect and track data disaggregated by gender, race, ethnicity, and offense, and implement plans to minimize disproportionate minority contact across different points of interaction in the justice system.*
8. *Advocate and support status offense system reform, and promote the use of community-based alternatives to incarceration.*
9. *Ensure practices and policies in the juvenile justice system are developmentally appropriate and trauma-informed.*
10. *Shift to a Balanced and Restorative Justice approach.*
11. *Provide programming and supports to disconnected boys and young men of color in correctional facilities.*
12. *Form cross-system collaborations and partnerships between the justice system and other agencies, including workforce, mental health, arts and culture, and higher education, to meet the comprehensive needs of disconnected young men of color.*
13. *Reduce recidivism by adopting rehabilitative models and behavioral interventions to help reconnect young men of color released from the justice system to education and employment pathways.*
14. *Support and utilize national service and the Conservation Corps.*

### SUPPORTING DISCONNECTED BOYS AND YOUNG MEN OF COLOR IN, OR RECENTLY AGED OUT OF, THE FOSTER CARE SYSTEM

15. *Prevent youth from becoming disconnected when they age out of the foster care system by leveraging research on brain development, youth permanence, and extended foster care.*
16. *Adopt cross-system approaches to address the needs of youth transitioning out of foster care.*
17. *Invest in the social, emotional, and physical well-being of older youth in foster care.*
18. *Use a race and gender lens.*

### SUPPORTING DISCONNECTED BOYS AND YOUNG MEN OF COLOR EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

19. *Create and implement a comprehensive community plan to end youth homelessness.*
20. *Ensure your community is employing effective strategies to reconnect homeless boys and young men of color, including runaway and trafficked youth.*
21. *Help homeless boys and young men of color stay in school.*
22. *Support LGBTQ homeless youth.*



## STRATEGIES THAT SPAN THE MILESTONES

Some of the most effective strategies for reconnecting disconnected boys and young men of color cut across the My Brother's Keeper milestones. Supporting disconnected youth often requires helping in multiple aspects of their lives. Therefore, putting into place integrated approaches can be a particularly useful place to start.

- Include disconnected boys and young men of color in developing and implementing your strategy.
- Use a racial and gender equity lens and promote cultural competence and sensitivity in all facets of your work.
- Gather data on your community's disconnected boys and young men of color.
- Determine how much funding is available and identify opportunities to leverage funds to serve disconnected boys and young men of color.
- Ensure there is a mechanism to align governmental efforts for disconnected boys and young men of color.
- Consider applying to become a federal Performance Partnership Pilots site.
- Learn from networks and national place-based initiatives focused on boys and young men of color and opportunity youth.

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ACCESS THE TOOLKIT COMPANION, LIST OF KEY ORGANIZATIONS AND RESOURCES FOR SUPPORTING DISCONNECTED BOYS AND YOUNG MEN OF COLOR BY MILESTONE AT [FORUMFYI.ORG/OYN\\_MBKA\\_TOOLKIT](http://FORUMFYI.ORG/OYN_MBKA_TOOLKIT)





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