

IT TAKES A VILLAGE: Diversion Resources for Police and Families

ISSUE: Troubling youth behavior



running away from home



violating curfew



skipping school



disobeying adults



violence

Communities are frustrated with how to respond appropriately to youth “acting out”—behaviors that are sometimes part of typical adolescent development and sometimes symptoms of greater challenges.

Communities also struggle with how to respond to youth getting arrested for more serious actions like fighting and other misbehavior stemming from family conflict.



When families are dealing with behavioral issues, particularly incidents that result in fighting at home, they may unwittingly send their children into the justice system by calling the police, because they feel they have nowhere to turn to for help.

TYPICAL RESPONSE: Arrest and custody



Without other options, police officers often arrest and book the youth into custody, especially when responding to domestic disturbance calls, where officers are reluctant to leave a youth or their family in a crisis situation.



Police officers encountering these family crisis situations are often faced with choices that are not optimal: either ignoring problem behavior or criminalizing it, neither of which resolve the situation or lead to appropriate solutions.

WHAT WE KNOW: Research findings



The human brain does not fully develop until one's mid-twenties.



Young people in their teen years are more susceptible to peer-pressure, less able to consider the consequences of their actions, and are more volatile in emotionally-charged settings.



Getting involved in the juvenile justice system can be detrimental. Kids found guilty on delinquency charges can end up with a record that may follow them throughout their lives—making it difficult to find a job, apply for public housing, obtain a driver's license, access higher education, and more. Even when not found delinquent for any offense, they still experience stigma from the arrest or negative police contact.



Traditional responses like arrest and detention perpetuate racial disparities in our justice system.

AS OUR UNDERSTANDING OF ADOLESCENT DEVELOPMENT EVOLVES, traditional strategies of arresting youth as the primary response to troubling behavior are starting to change. Communities—including police—are implementing a variety of innovative strategies to better address and support these youth and families.

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PROMISING PRACTICES & EXAMPLES



JUVENILE ASSESSMENT RESOURCE CENTERS

Drop-in resource and assessment centers serve as “diversion hubs” where police officers, families, and school personnel can bring youth engaged in low-level misbehavior or who just need a safe place to go if home or school is not an option. These centers employ social workers, mental health clinicians, and other community-based professionals to assess the presenting issues and connect youth and their families to services and support without justice-system involvement. Many of them are open around the clock, and are in accessible and convenient locations for police officers and families.



CRISIS RESPONSE SERVICES

Many jurisdictions have created crisis response systems to support law enforcement, schools, families, and other agencies needing immediate help—often by connecting families to behavioral health services, instead of to emergency rooms and the justice system. Trained case workers respond quickly to law enforcement or family calls, either by phone or in person, assess the situation, and determine the best course of action, usually by connecting youth and their families with community-based supports and case management services.



CRISIS INTERVENTION TEAMS FOR YOUTH (CIT-Y)

The CIT for Youth (CIT-Y) program, focused on crisis prevention, trains law enforcement officers to better understand, identify and react to adolescent development and mental health issues, and to help connect those youth to effective and appropriate services and supports in their community. Some communities are going beyond this model, to not only train and connect police officers with community resources, but to also incorporate crisis response programs into their initial response.



2010 **PEORIA COUNTY, ILLINOIS:** In response to a high number of Adolescent Domestic Battery (ADB) calls, police and other county leaders decided to utilize the statewide Comprehensive Community-Based Youth Services' (CCBYS) 24-hour crisis intervention service and changed arrest and detention protocols to allow police to make referrals to community social services providers. Eighty-five percent of youth referred to crisis intervention for ADB had no further domestic battery contacts while receiving services.



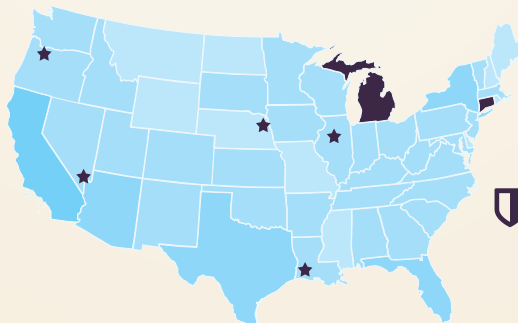
2015 **GRESHAM, OREGON:** Gresham is currently in the midst of a strategic planning process to open a juvenile reception center that serves youth and families in crisis in an accessible and welcoming location.



2015 **SARPY COUNTY, NEBRASKA:** Although under a year old, the Heartland Family Service Crisis Mediation Team has conducted over 90 face-to-face CMT interventions, none of which led to juvenile detention.



2016 **LAS VEGAS, NEVADA:** Set to open in fall 2016, a variety of Southern Nevada stakeholders are developing an assessment center to provide both diversion and intervention services for youth, with a specific goal of reducing the disproportionate arrest and detention of African American youth.



2011 **CALCASIEU PARISH, LOUISIANA:** The Multi Agency Resource Center (MARC), while initially focused on being a resource for law enforcement, has also become a resource that families can trust and use without relying on police intervention. Between 2012 and 2015, the MARC saw a 150 percent increase in the number of direct family walk-ins without police referral.



2015 **MICHIGAN STATE:** After implementing CIT-Y across the state, stakeholders have seen an increased number of referrals to mental health providers and a decrease in the number of automatic juvenile justice referrals from police officers.



2011 **CONNECTICUT STATE:** The state implemented CIT-Y and added a partnership with the Emergency Mobile Psychiatric Services program. In 2015, fewer than 2 percent of the 12,472 EMPS responses ended with arrest.