



Justice Center

THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

NAVIGATING YOUTH CRIME, VIOLENCE, AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH: WHAT DOES THE DATA SAY?

3 FACTS TO KNOW, 3 STEPS TO TAKE

July 29, 2024

Josh Weber



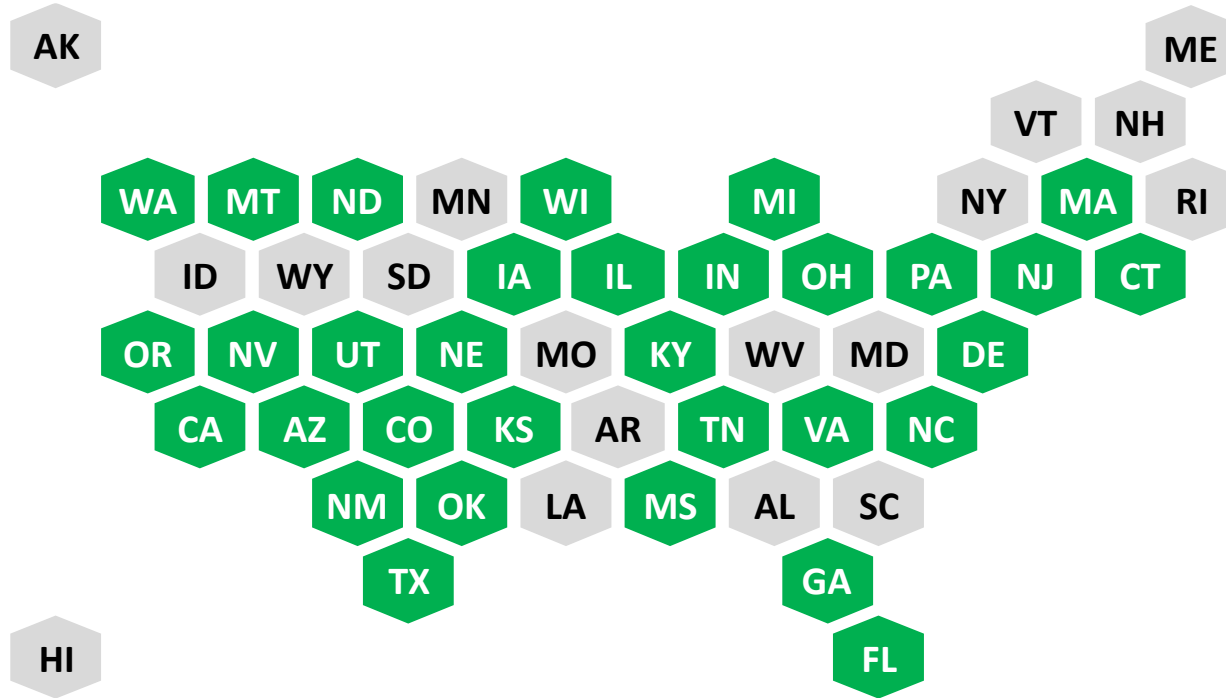
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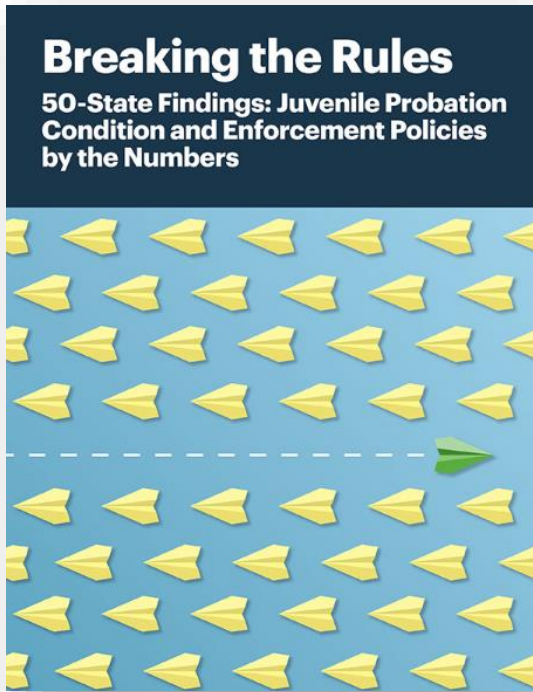
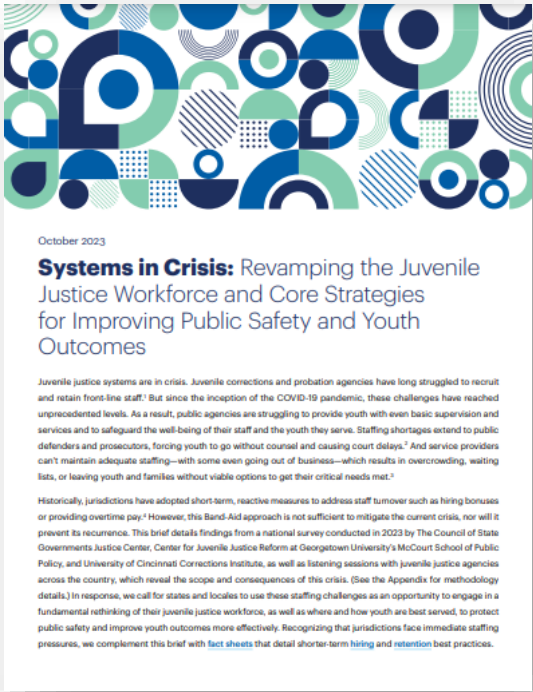
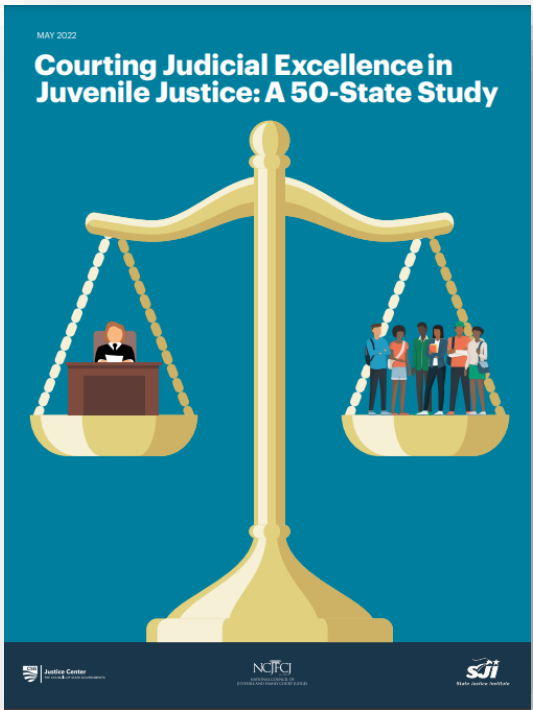
We are a national nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that combines the power of a membership association, serving state officials in all three branches of government, with policy and research expertise to develop strategies that increase public safety and strengthen communities.



We've worked with an array of states and counties to facilitate improvements to their youth justice system.



Our work also responds to emerging issues and challenges in the field with research, best practices, and innovations.





Rise in concerns about youth crime and violence and political polarization not seen since mid-90s.

NEWS & POLITICS

Politics of fear: Are youth really to blame for the carjacking spike?

Cops say masked teens with a thirst for violence and joyrides are terrorizing the city. An examination of arrests reveals a narrative built on shoddy data and anecdotal evidence.

Opinion

Opinion: To fix our juvenile justice system, we need accountability for offenders

Juvenile Crime Surges, Reversing Long Decline. 'It's Just Kids Killing Kids.'

Violence among children has soared across the country since 2020. One consequence: a mounting toll of young victims.

Lawmakers looking to hold parents accountable for their children's crimes

Governor wants juvenile justice bills to focus on accountability

'You can't keep letting them get away with it': Addressing juvenile crime



**Navigating youth crime, violence, and
behavioral health: What does the data say?**

3 Facts to Know

1. Adolescents are increasingly struggling with a host of challenges that can impact their well-being, and ultimately, their risk to themselves or others.

Public systems and providers are struggling to address these needs.

Adolescents have been experiencing rising mental health challenges, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic.



29% of high school students reported that “their mental health was most of the time or always not good.”



The proportion of high school students who “seriously considered attempting suicide” has risen steadily from 13.8% in 2009 to 22.2%.



Over 42% of high school students, including 56% of girls, reported that they “felt sad or hopeless,” compared to 26 percent in 2009.



Reported tobacco, alcohol, and substance use generally declined over the last decade. Yet overdose deaths spiked during the pandemic and remained elevated into 2022.

Youth Risk and Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) 2021



Adolescents are also experiencing trauma that can lead to behavioral health needs and justice system involvement.



55% reported experiencing emotional abuse by a parent/adult in the home and 12% reported physical abuse.



11% “experienced sexual violence by anyone,” including 18% of girls.



20% “ever saw someone get physically attacked, beaten, stabbed, or shot in their neighborhood,” including almost 30% of Black students.

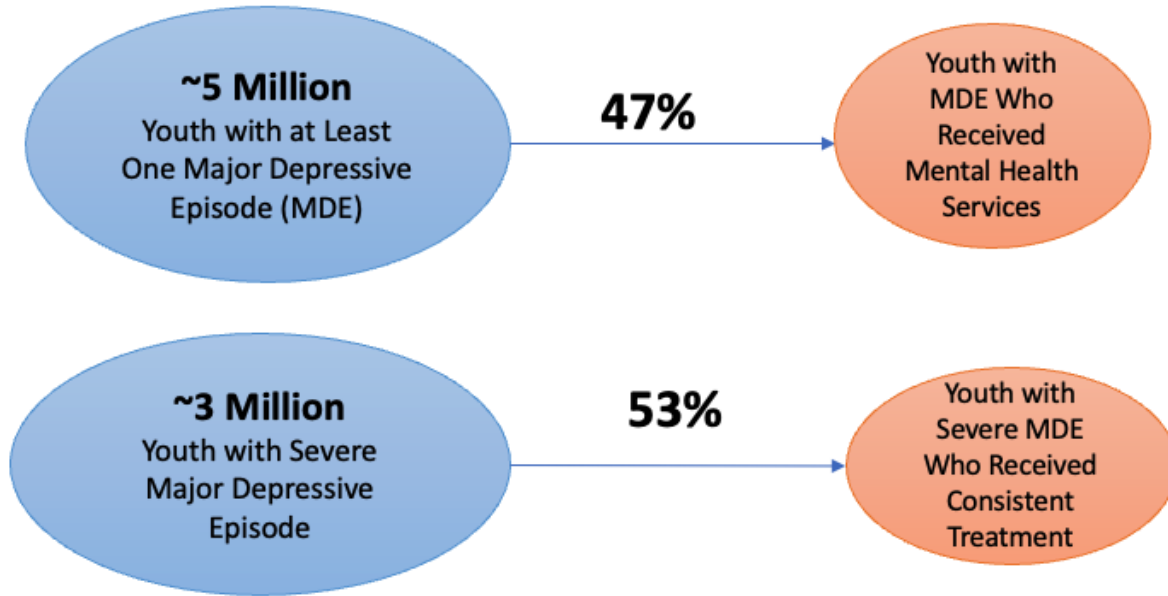


36% reported perceived racism, including over half of Black, Asian, and mixed-race students.

Youth Risk and Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) and Adolescent Behaviors and Experiences Survey 2021



Most states lack adolescent prevention or behavioral health systems statewide to address these challenges.



SAMHSA, Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2022

Public agencies are facing unprecedented staff hiring and retention challenges, undermining their ability to help address youth's needs.



More than 85% cite moderate/severe challenges in hiring and retaining staff.



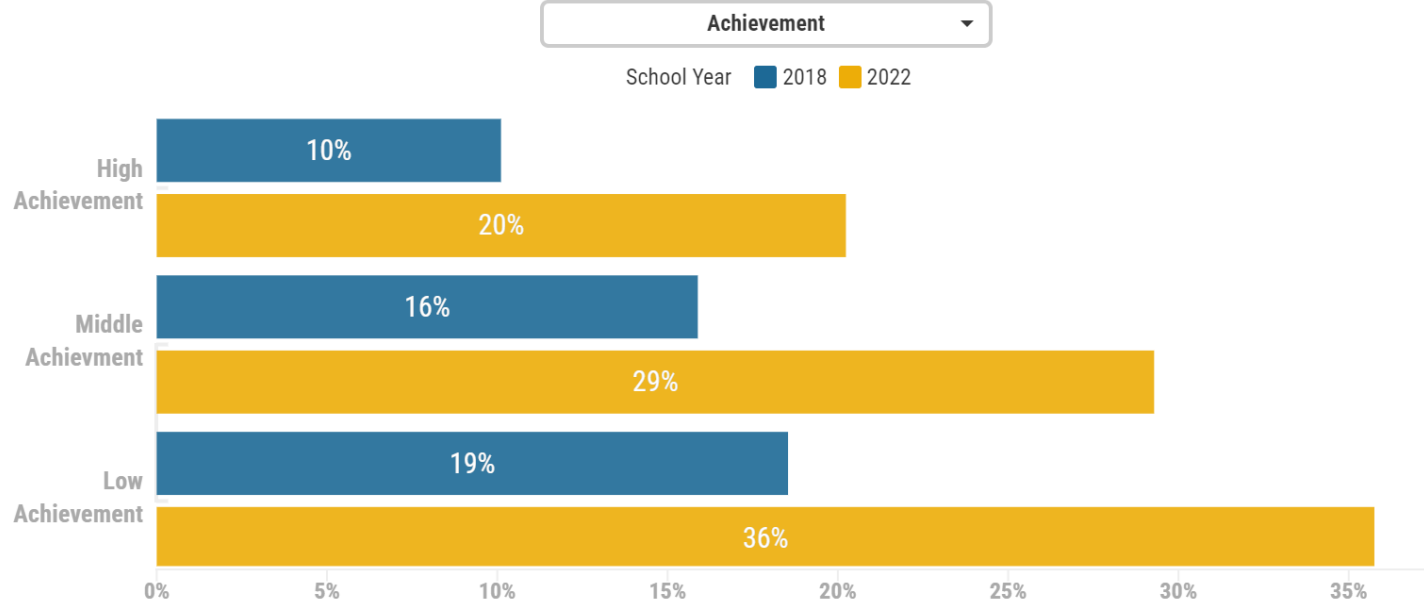
55% reported these challenges are more severe than anytime in the past 5 or 10 years.



Less than 10% of respondents felt their state had a plan to address staffing challenges.

Schools have been a key outlet for identifying and supporting youth with special needs, but absenteeism has surged.

Chronic Absenteeism by District Type: 2018–2022



American Enterprise Institute, “Return 2 Learn Tracker,” accessed June 3, 2024, <https://www.returntolearntogether.net/>.

Service providers are also experiencing a staffing crisis, exposing and deepening the limited service capacity in most locales.

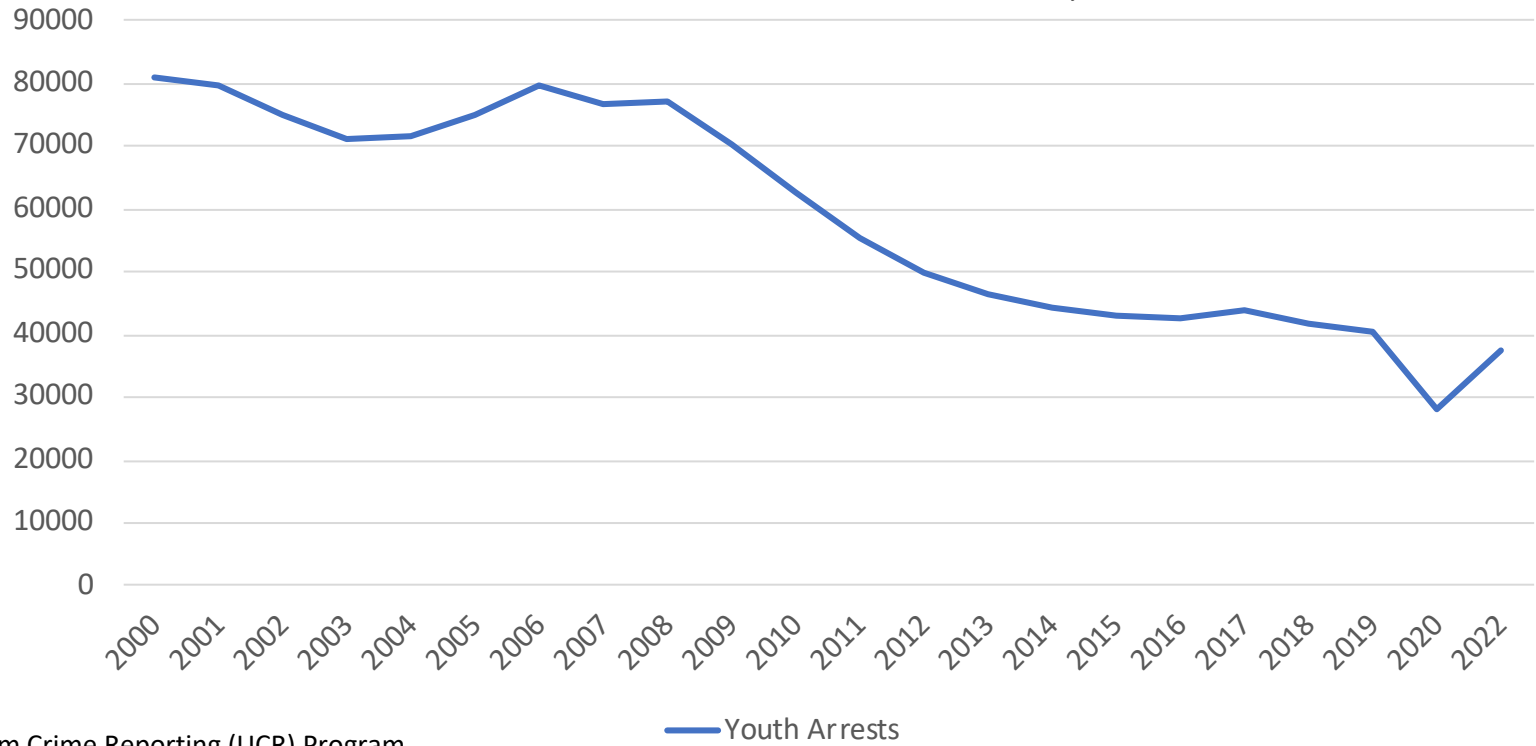
More than 85% of agencies reported severe/moderate staffing challenges with service providers.

More than 80% reported staffing challenges have a moderate/severe impact on service availability.

2. Youth arrests for violent offenses overall remain historically low. However, post-pandemic, youth arrests for homicide and weapons surged.

Overall, arrests for youth violence declined 54% from 2000 to 2022, and in 2022, were historically low vs. anytime other than the pandemic.

Total Youth Arrests for Violent Index Offenses, 2000–2022

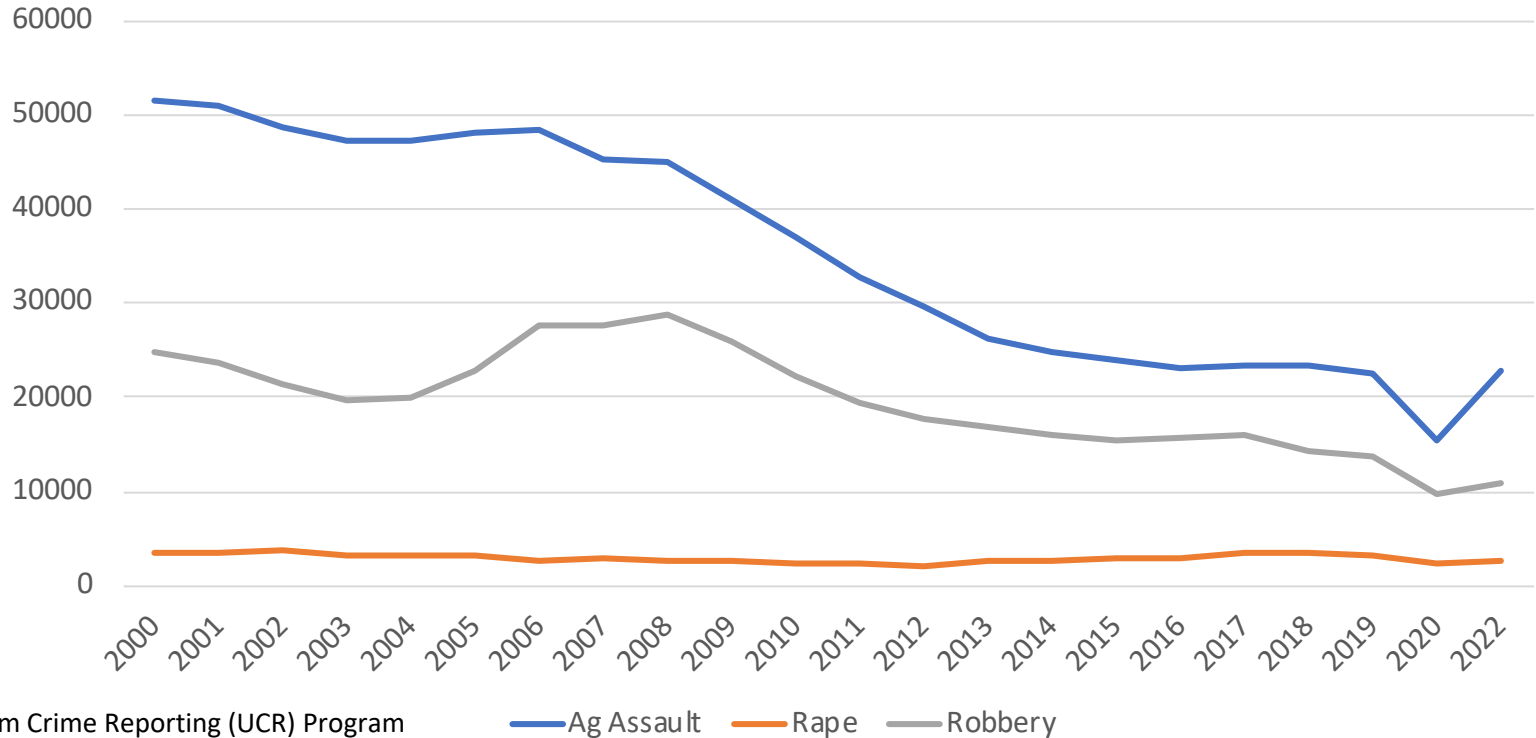


FBI Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program



In 2022, youth arrests for aggravated assault, rape, and robbery remained historically low.

Youth Arrests for Aggravated Assault, Rape, and Robbery, 2000–2022



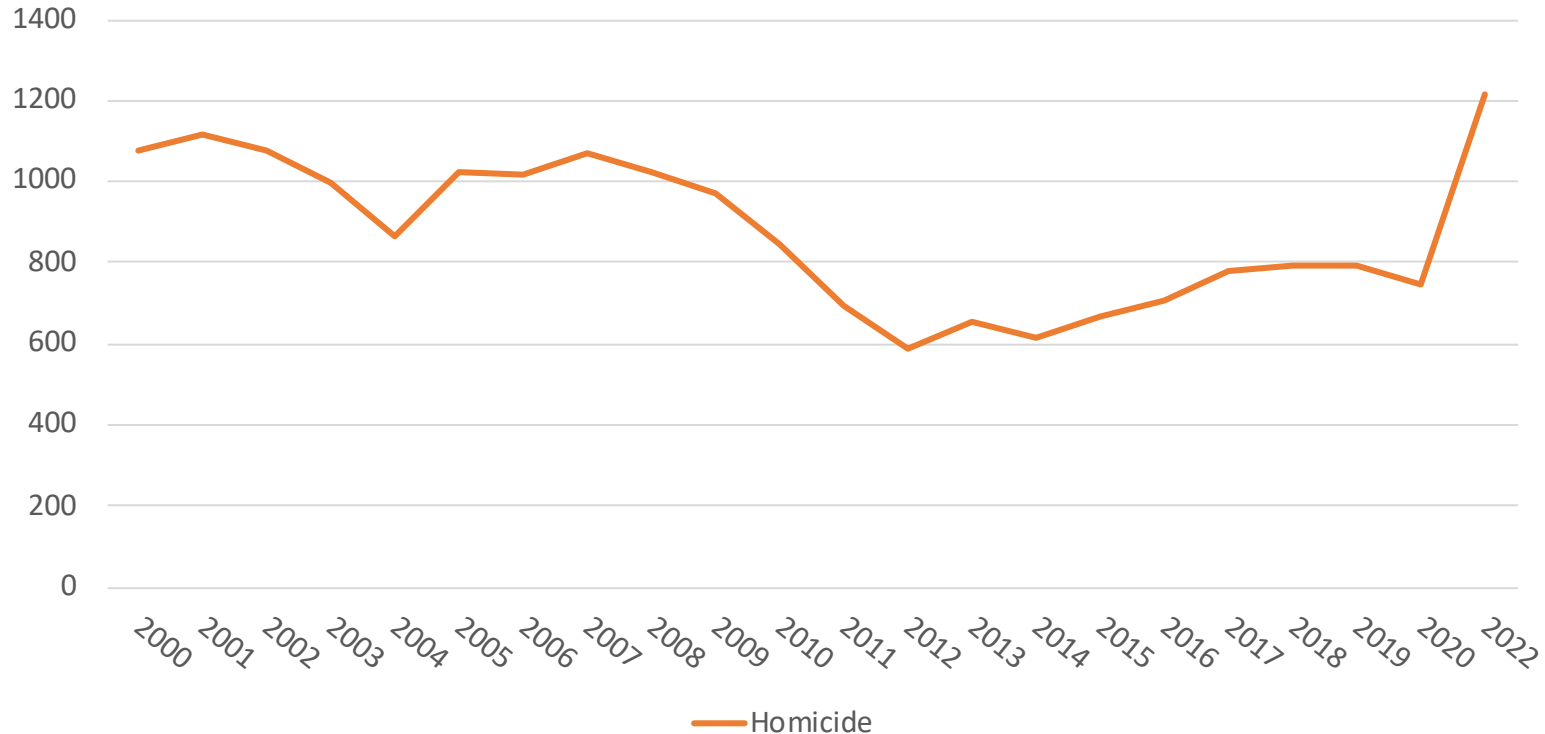
FBI Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program

— Ag Assault — Rape — Robbery



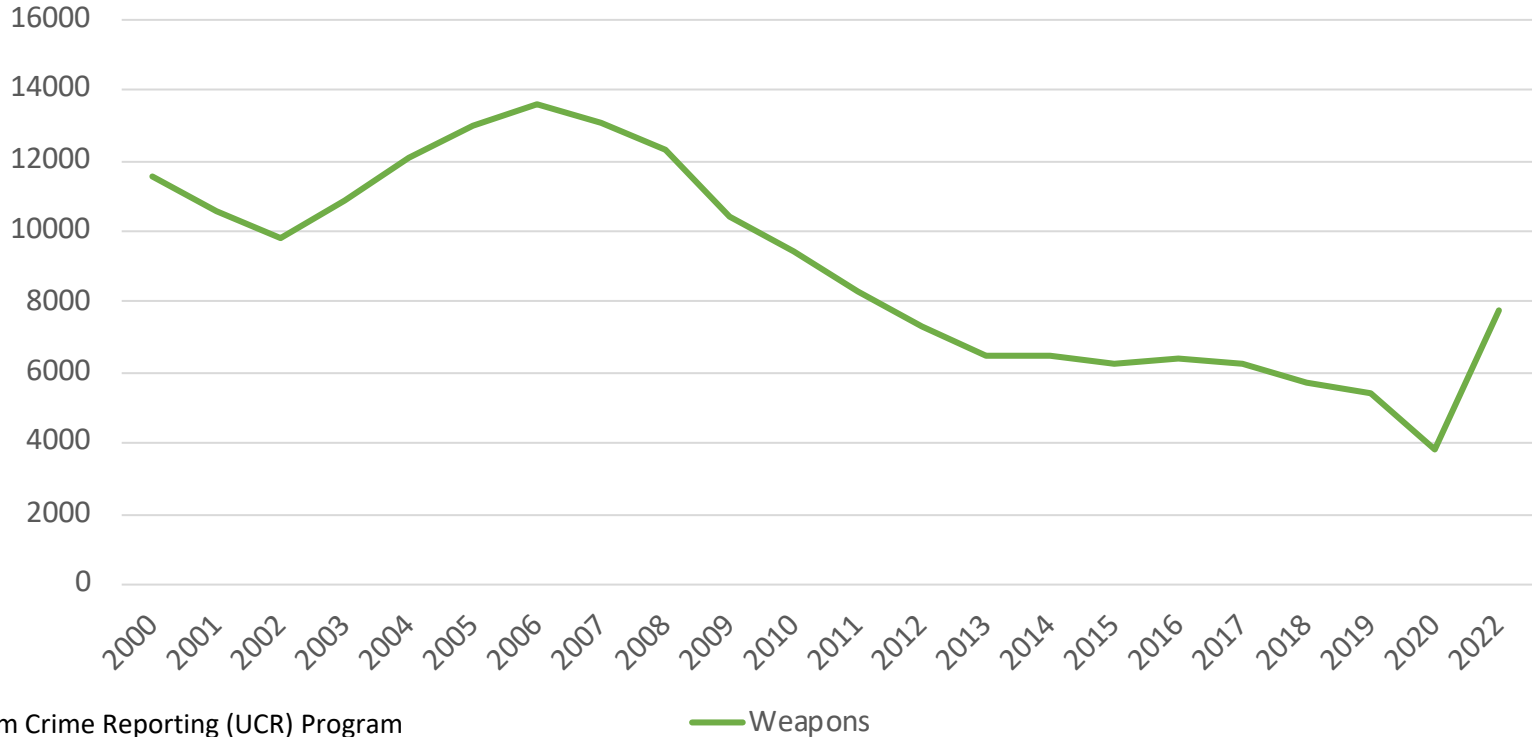
Youth arrests for homicides have generally been increasing for a decade and surged in 2022.

Youth Arrests for Homicides, 2000–2022



Arrests for weapons offenses have been consistently declining but spiked in 2022 to levels not seen for a decade.

Youth Arrests for Weapons, 31 States, 2000–2022

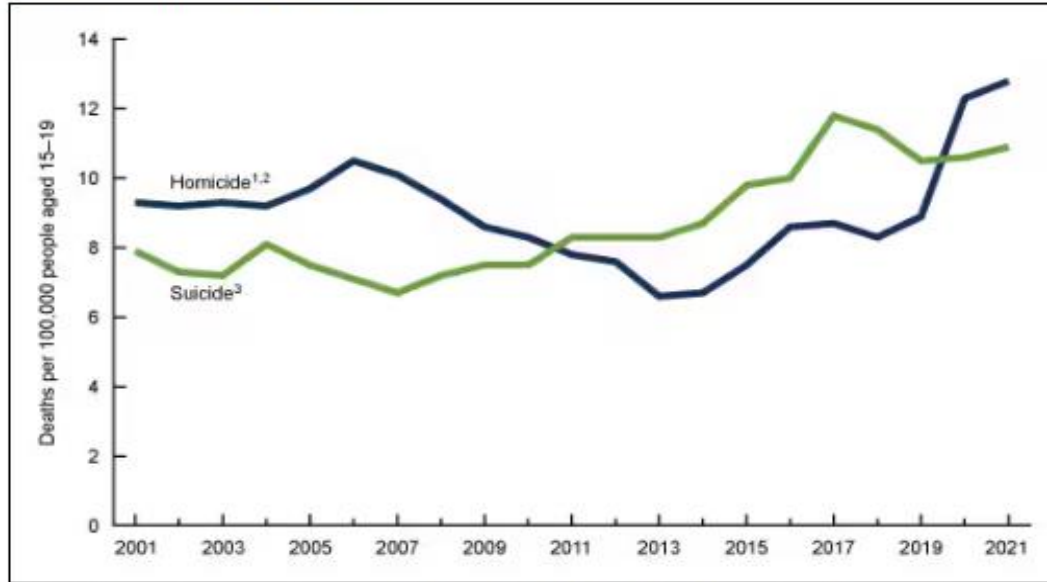


FBI Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program

— Weapons

Homicide and suicide are now leading causes of death among children and young adults.

Figure 3. Suicide and homicide death rates among people aged 15–19: United States, 2001–2021



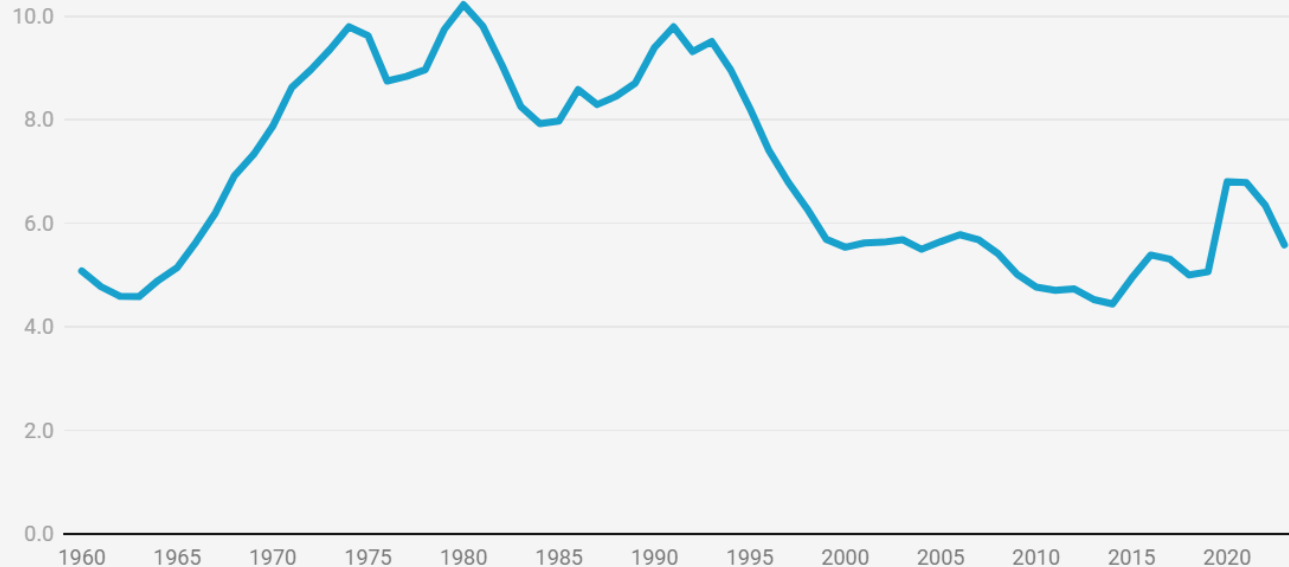
In 2022, the rate of firearm deaths among Black youth was 22 times higher than White youth.

In 2022, in half of all cases in which a young person under 18 committed a violent crime, the victim was also under 18.

“Suicide and Homicide Death Rates Among Youth and Young Adults Aged 10–24: United States, 2001–2021, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2023.

Initial data from 2023/2024 (youth and adult combined) shows substantial declines in violence.

US Murder Rate Per 100k (2023 Rate Estimated)



[Get the data](#) • Created with [Datawrapper](#)

Jeff Asher, "It's Early, But Murder Is Falling Even Faster So Far In 2024," April 2, 2024, accessed July 26, 2024, taken from FBI Quarterly Uniform Crime Report data, 2024, <https://jasher.substack.com/p/its-early-but-murder-is-falling-even>.

3. The juvenile justice system should focus limited resources on youth who have committed, or are at high risk of committing, serious and violent offenses.

Yet most youth who are involved in the system have committed offenses that don't involve physical harm to another person.

Diversion is a more effective public safety strategy than system involvement for most youth.

Youth formally processed by the juvenile justice system experience far worse outcomes in the 5 years post-arrest than their matched peers who were diverted:

More likely to be re-arrested and incarcerated

More engaged in violence

More peers involved in delinquency

Lower school attainment and graduation rates

Fewer skills to manage their emotions

Lower perception of opportunity

The number of youth arrested, referred to court, detained, and incarcerated declined significantly from 2000 to 2022.



Most youth involved at every point in the juvenile justice system have committed non-person offenses as their most serious offense.

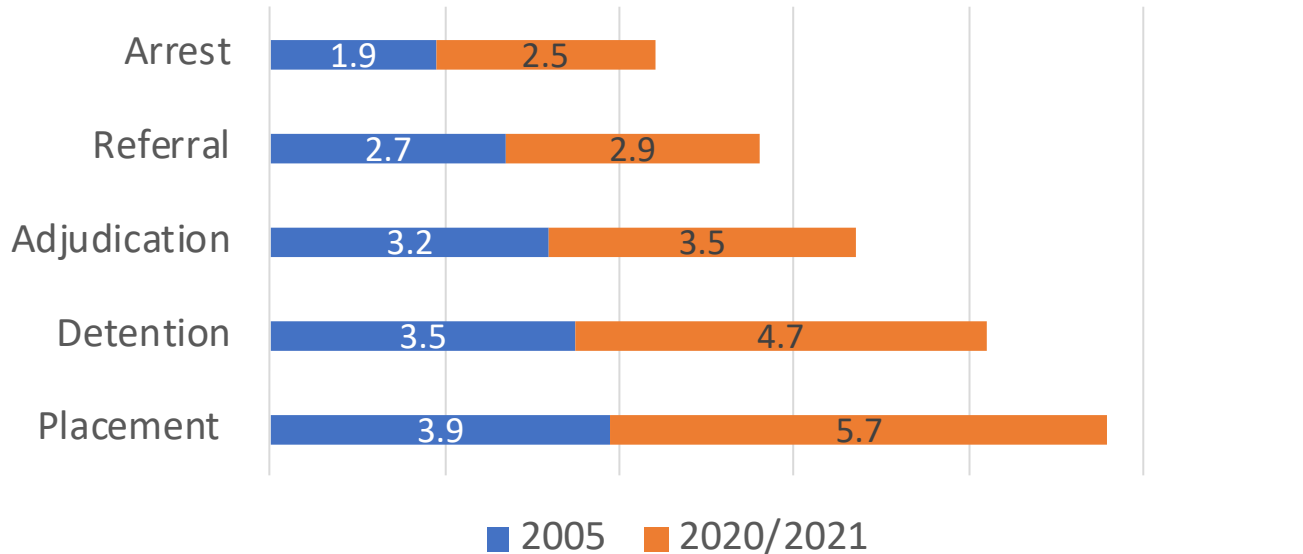
Proportion of All Youth at Each Decision Point Whose Most Serious Offense was a Non-Person Delinquent Offense in 2021/2022

Arrest 70%	Court Referrals 63%	Court Petitions 62%	Adjudication 63%	Probation 62%	Detention 56%	Placement 62%
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FBI Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program + Easy Access to Juvenile Court Statistics

Racial disparities in system involvement have worsened for Black (and American Indian) youth at every decision point.

Juvenile Justice Relative Rate Index for Black Youth,
2005 vs. 2020/2021

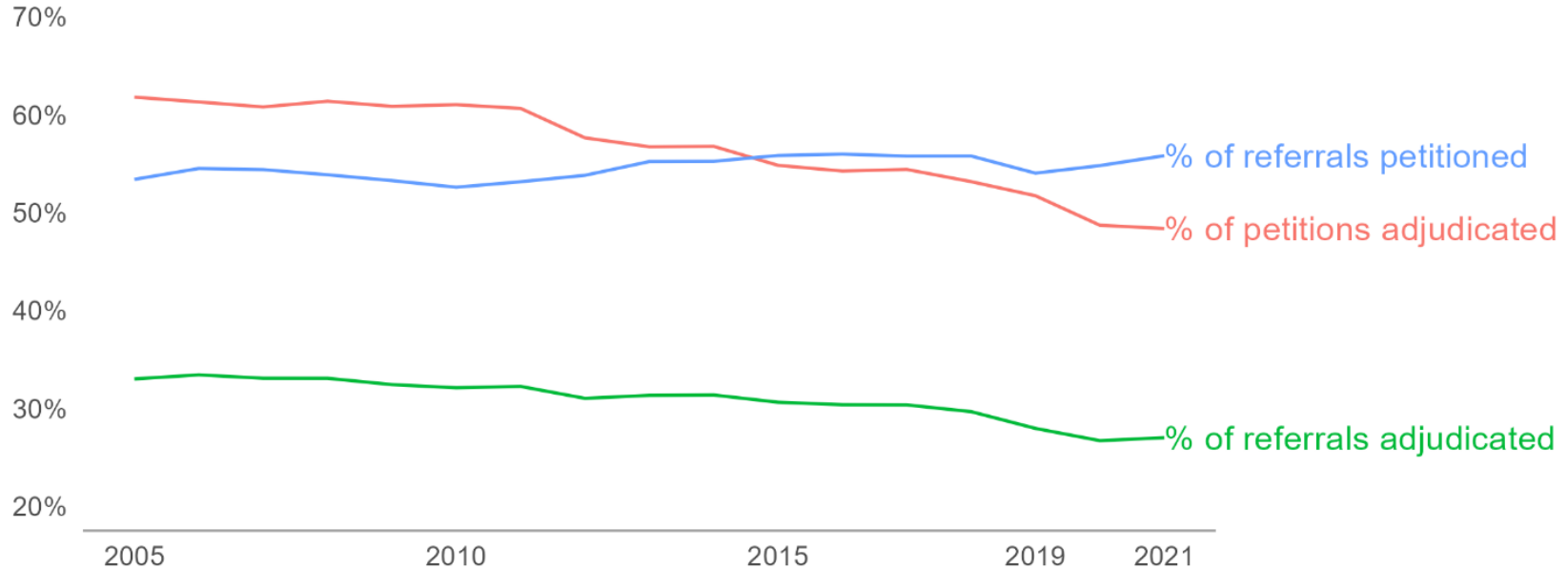


FBI Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program + Easy Access to Juvenile Court Statistics



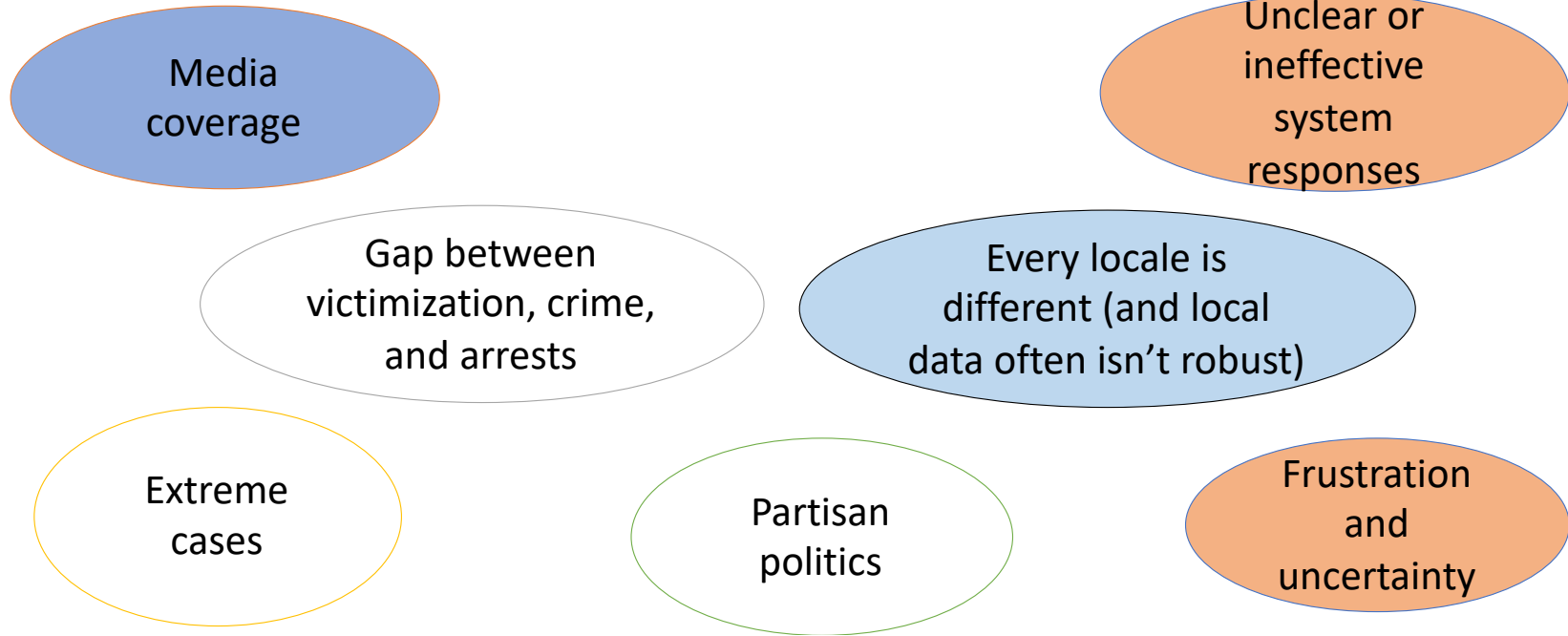
Less than 30% of youth referred to court are adjudicated, raising questions about the benefits and efficiency of formal system processing.

Court referral petition and adjudication rates for delinquent offenses



Easy Access to Juvenile Court Statistics

Perceptions and policy responses to youth crime/violence are influenced by more than data.



Navigating youth crime, violence, and behavioral health: What does the data say?

3 Steps to Take

1. Develop a statewide adolescent services and violence prevention strategy to address and mitigate the root causes of youth's behaviors.

A statewide strategy to address youth behavioral health, crime, and violence should be guided by core principles.

1. Statewide, Structural, Cross-Systems, and Outcome Oriented
2. Focused on Services Rather Than Court, Supervision, or Sanctions
3. Individualized, Research-Based, Developmentally Appropriate, and Culturally Competent
4. Community Based
5. Youth and Family Centered

What might a statewide adolescent prevention services strategy look like in practice?

Statewide Family Resource/Assessment Centers

Mobile Crisis and Alternative Responders

Respite and Shelter

Family Navigators

Restorative Practices

Multisystem Teaming

CBT/Family Therapy

Mental health/SU Programs

Violence Interrupters

Credible Messengers

2. Focus law enforcement and juvenile justice systems' limited resources on the small number of youth who pose a public safety risk and on proven recidivism-reduction strategies.

Juvenile justice systems should focus limited resources on higher-risk youth and remain committed to evidence-based approaches.

- ✓ Scale diversion and deflection efforts and rethink the footprint of courts.
- ✓ Use risk and needs screening/assessment tools at all major decision points.
- ✓ Limit use of out-of-home placement and develop intensive, evidence-based, community-based alternatives for higher-risk youth.
- ✓ Repurpose supervision to focus on youth services, support structures, and skill building and respond to case challenges with incentives and graduated responses rather than punishment/deeper system involvement.
- ✓ Invest in quality assurance and data collection, analysis, and use.

3. Address gaps in public agency and service provider capacity and workforce.

Strengthen public agency staff recruitment, hiring, and retention.

Short Term:

- ✓ Raise pay to competitive market rates and provide for annual, inflation-adjusted increases.
- ✓ Streamline hiring processes, including barriers to employing credible messengers.
- ✓ Create more micro promotional pathways, retention incentives, and wellness supports.

Long Term:

- ✓ Consider what staff skills, qualifications, experiences, and attitudes (and related pay) are needed to work with complex adolescents and their families.
- ✓ Partner with colleges, universities, and workforce boards to create a workforce pipeline strategy including internships, apprenticeships, credentialing, and related incentives.

Expand service provider and workforce capacity.

- ✓ Conduct community resource mapping with youth, families, providers, and community leaders and grassroots organizations.
- ✓ Experiment with methods to attract a larger and more diverse pool of providers such as through requests for information and solicitations that prioritize grassroots models.
- ✓ Evaluate whether current funding models incorporate the full costs of doing business and the challenges of working with higher-risk adolescents, and adjust funding as needed.
- ✓ Develop a cross-systems, statewide, collaborative strategy for creating a pipeline of people committed to working in this field.
- ✓ Expand teleservices as well as repurpose and train public agency staff to deliver more direct services and skill building.

+1 Develop an aggressive communication strategy using data, compelling examples, and credible messengers.

Resources and Technical Assistance Opportunity for States

Recently Released Tools and Insights for Improving Youth Justice and Outcomes

[Navigating Concerns on Youth Crime, Violence, and Behavioral Health:](#)

[What Does the Data Say?](#)

The CSG Justice Center analyzed the most recent behavioral health, arrest, and juvenile justice system data available so that policymakers can use this data to improve public safety and youth outcomes.

[Support or Court: How States Respond to Youth Who Commit Status Offenses and Children](#)

[Who Break the Law](#)

The CSG Justice Center examined how states currently treat youth who commit status offenses and young children who don't have the developmental capacity to fully understand the crimes they are committing. We share takeaways from a 50-state scan and propose a call to action.

[From First Offense to Future Arrests: The Impact of Probation on Youth](#)

A new study shows that young people assigned to probation after their first offense are more likely to be rearrested in the future, particularly for technical violations, than their peers diverted away from probation.



Supporting States through One-Day Improving Outcomes for Youth Site Visits

Share information on national research, data trends, and research-based innovations/best practices in youth justice and adolescent service delivery.

Identify shared perceptions of system strengths, gaps, and opportunities to improve public safety and youth outcomes through listening sessions.

Share takeaways with state leaders and identify priorities and next steps for short- and long-term policy, practice, and resource allocation improvement.



Thank You!

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<https://csgjusticecenter.org/resources/newsletters/>

**For more information, please contact Josh Weber at
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