

How Assessment Centers Promote Youth Diversion and Public Safety

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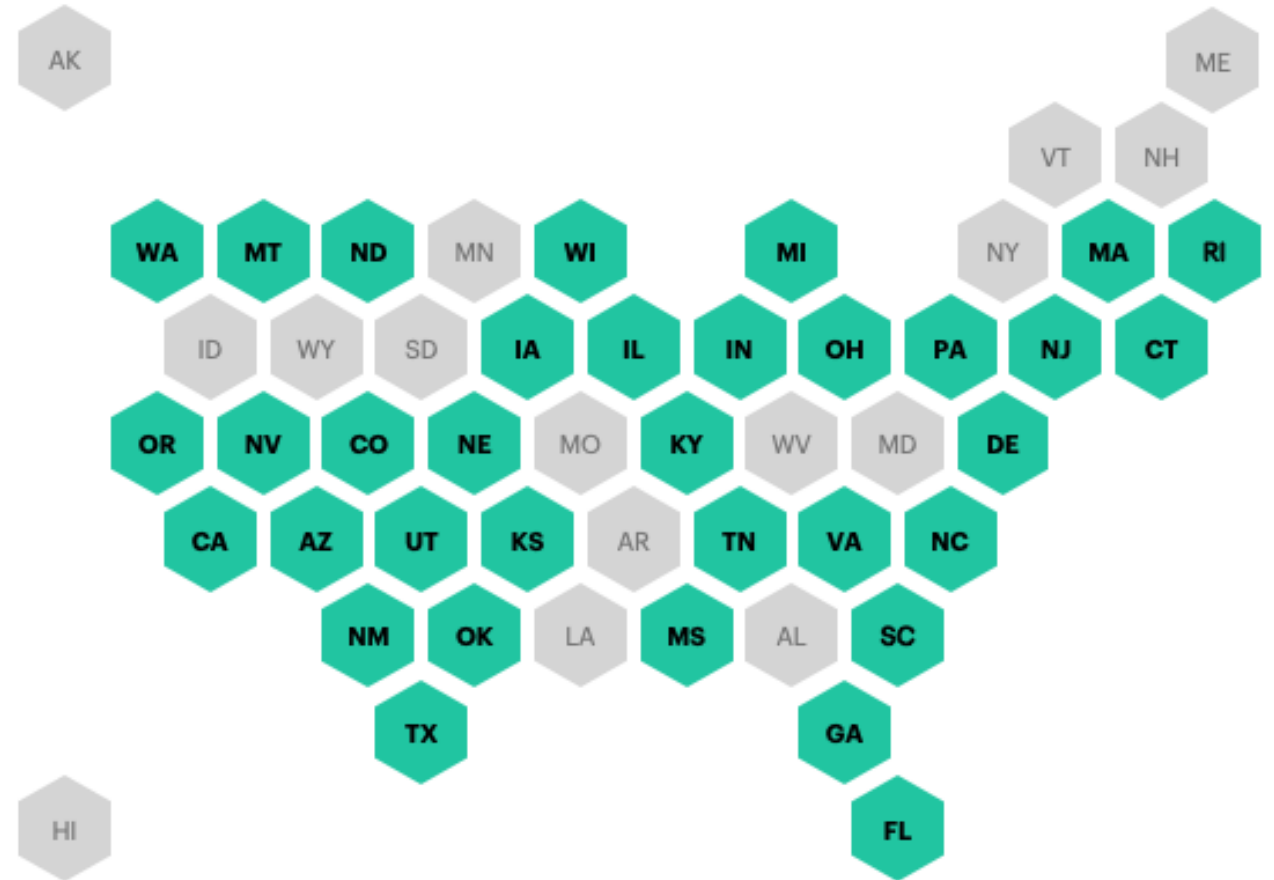
Justice Center
THE COUNCIL OF STATE GOVERNMENTS

About the CSG Justice Center

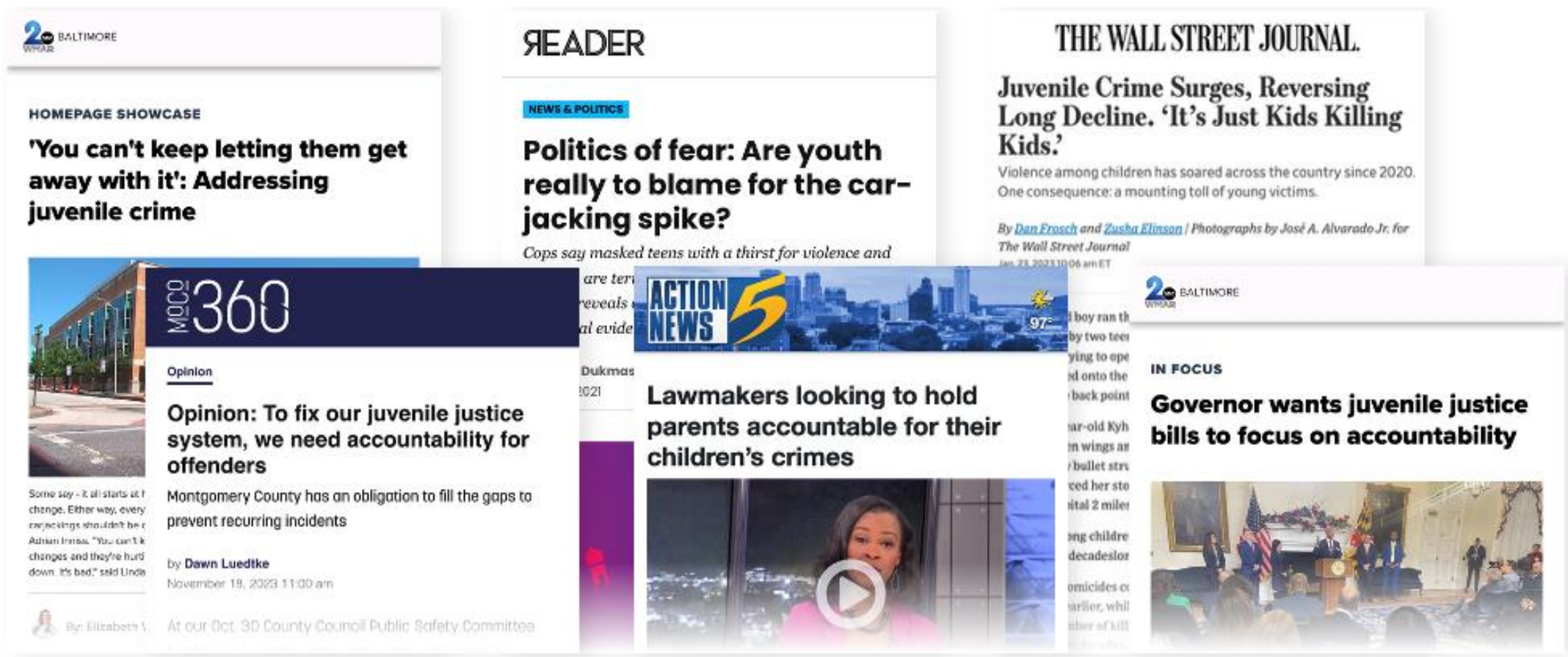
A national, nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that combines the power of a membership association, representing all three branches of state government, with policy and research expertise to develop strategies to increase public safety and strengthen communities



We've helped improve outcomes for millions of youth and families in contact with the juvenile justice system across the country.

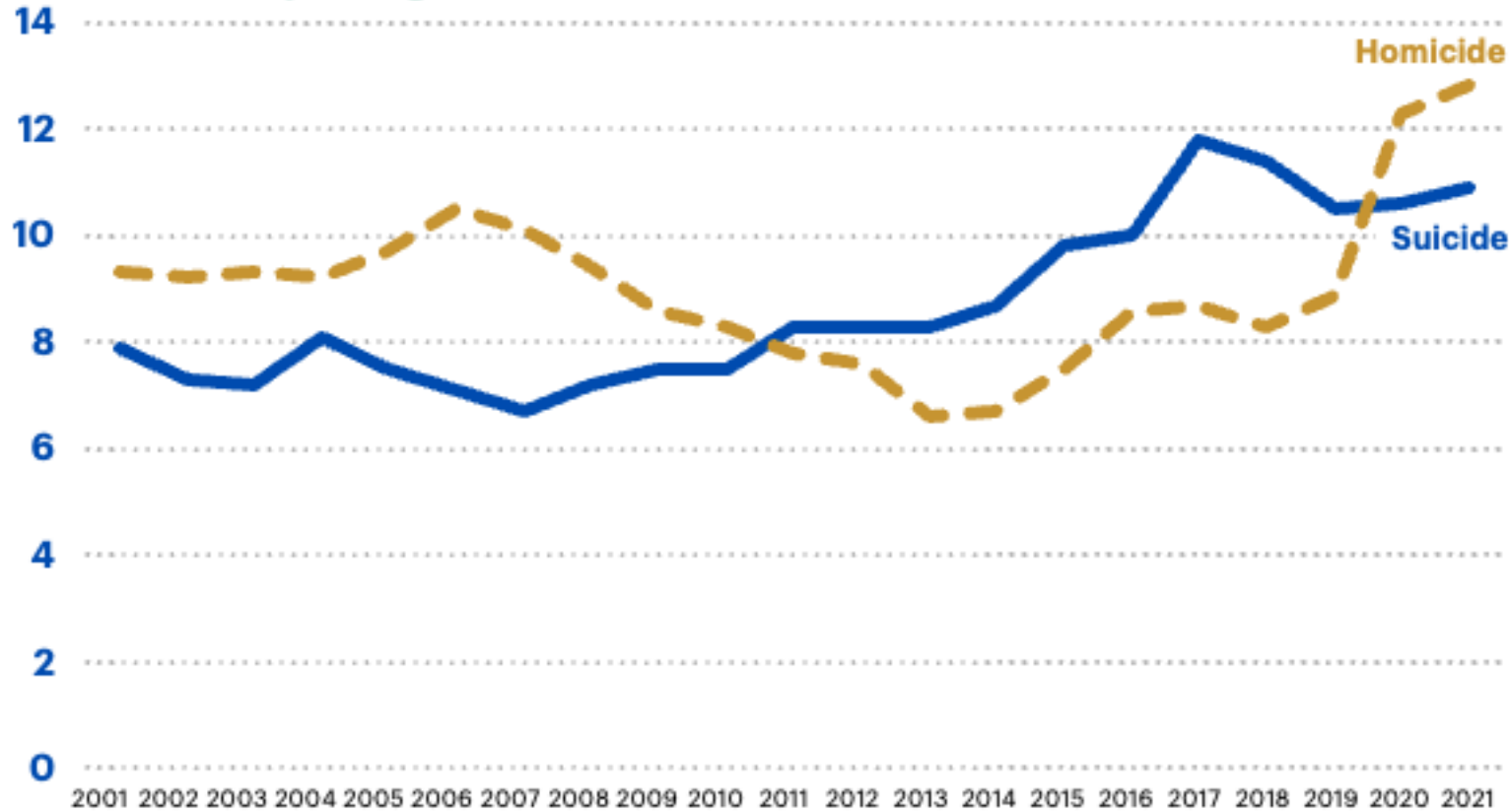


Public concern, media coverage, and political divisiveness on youth crime and violence is currently at levels not seen since the mid-1990s.



Homicide and suicide are now the leading causes of death among older adolescents, particularly among youth of color.

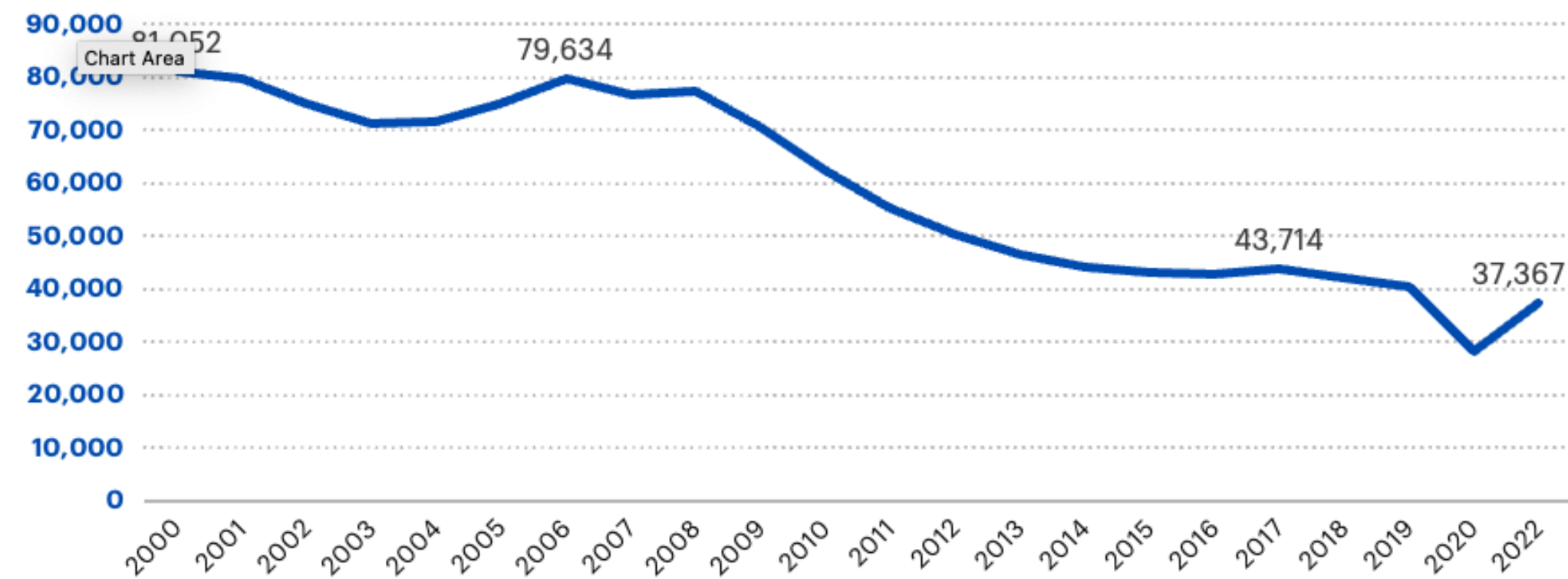
Suicide and Homicide Death Rates Among People Aged 15–19 in the U.S., 2001–2021



- In half of all cases in which a minor committed a violent crime, the victim was also a minor.
- The rate of firearm deaths among Black youth is 20 times higher than White youth.
- Rates of gun violence victimization for Black youth in rural areas are now equal to urban areas.

Overall, youth arrests for violent index offenses declined 54% from 2000 to 2022, and after a brief rise in 2023, declined again in 2024.

Total Youth Arrests for Violent Index Offenses (Aggravated Assault, Robbery, Rape, Homicide), 2000–2022



Approximately 6% of all youth arrests are for violent index offenses.

Most youth in the juvenile justice system have not caused physical harm to another person.

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

70%

**Arrest =
~250,000**

62%

**Probation =
~106,000**

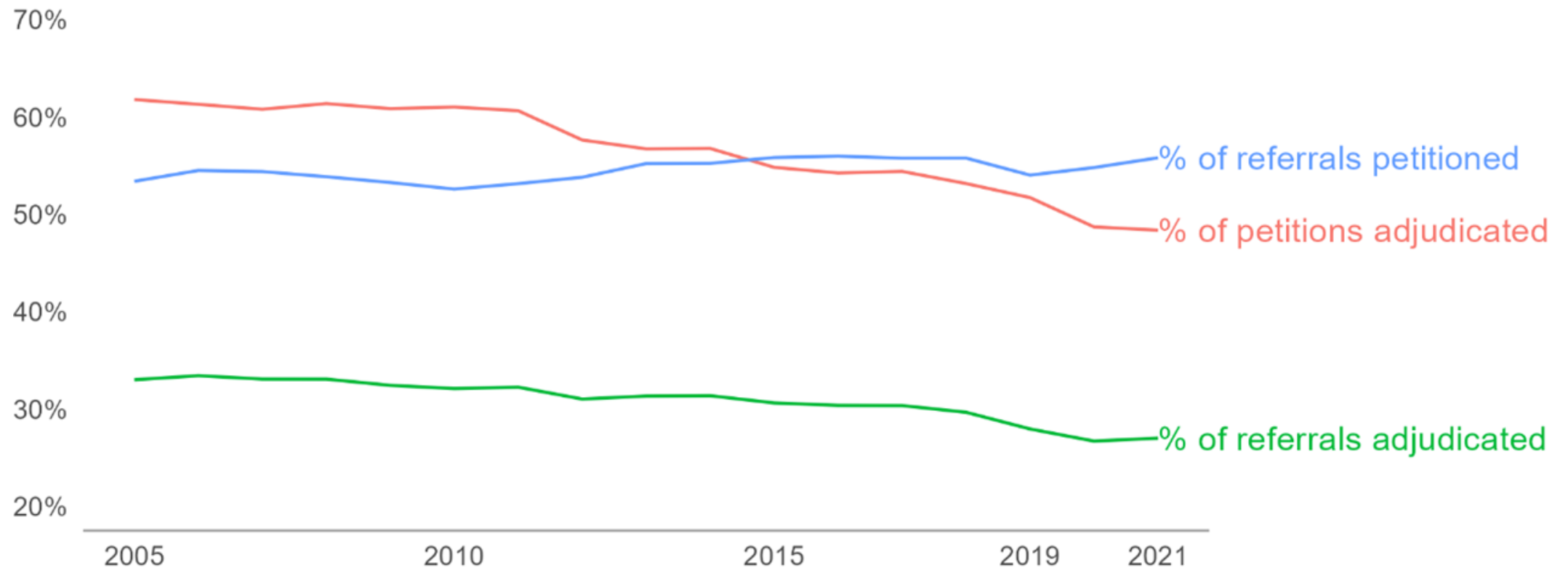
62%

**Incarceration =
~24,000**

*Recent findings from the Youth Protective Factor Study consistently show that youth referred to court and assessed as low risk had low rates of reoffending, including multiple years post-system contact, even though many of them never received any system supervision or services.

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

Court referral petition and adjudication rates for delinquent offenses



Easy Access to Juvenile Court Statistics

Youth of color are more likely to be pushed into the justice system than White youth; disparities have worsened over the last 15 years.

In 2020/2021, Black youth were:

2.5x

more likely to be
arrested

2.9x

more likely to be
referred to court

4.7x

more likely to be
detained

5.7x

more likely to be
placed

than White youth.

Justice system involvement negatively affects the entire course of young people's lives.

Youth formally processed by the juvenile justice system experience far worse outcomes in the 5 years after arrest as compared to similar youth who were diverted:

X More likely to be rearrested and incarcerated

X More engaged in violence

X More peers involved in delinquency

X Lower school attainment and graduation rates

X Fewer skills to manage their emotions

X Lower perception of opportunity



Adolescents are experiencing unprecedented mental health challenges, accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic.



29%

Reported that their **mental health was not good** “most of the time or always.”



20%

Seriously considered attempting suicide.



40%

Felt sad or hopeless, compared to 26% in 2009.
This includes 53% of girls and over 65% of LGBTQ youth.



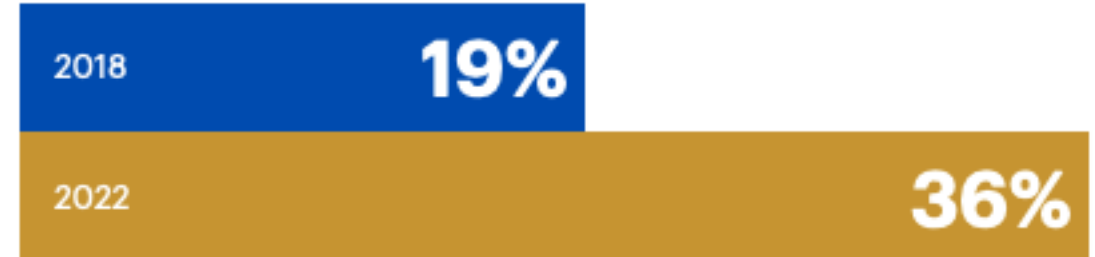
109%

Increase in adolescent drug overdose deaths during the pandemic.

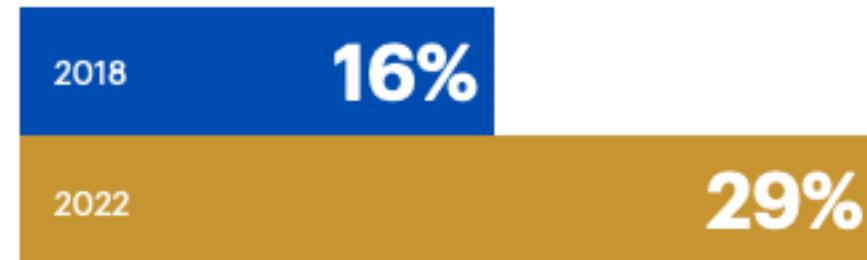
Schools have traditionally been a key outlet for identifying and supporting youth with behavioral health and other service needs, but absenteeism has surged.

Chronic Absenteeism by District Type 2018–2022

Low Achievement



Middle Achievement



High Achievement



Public agencies and providers are facing significant staffing challenges that are further undermining their ability to address youth's needs.

> 85%

Cite moderate or severe challenges in hiring and retaining staff.

> 80%

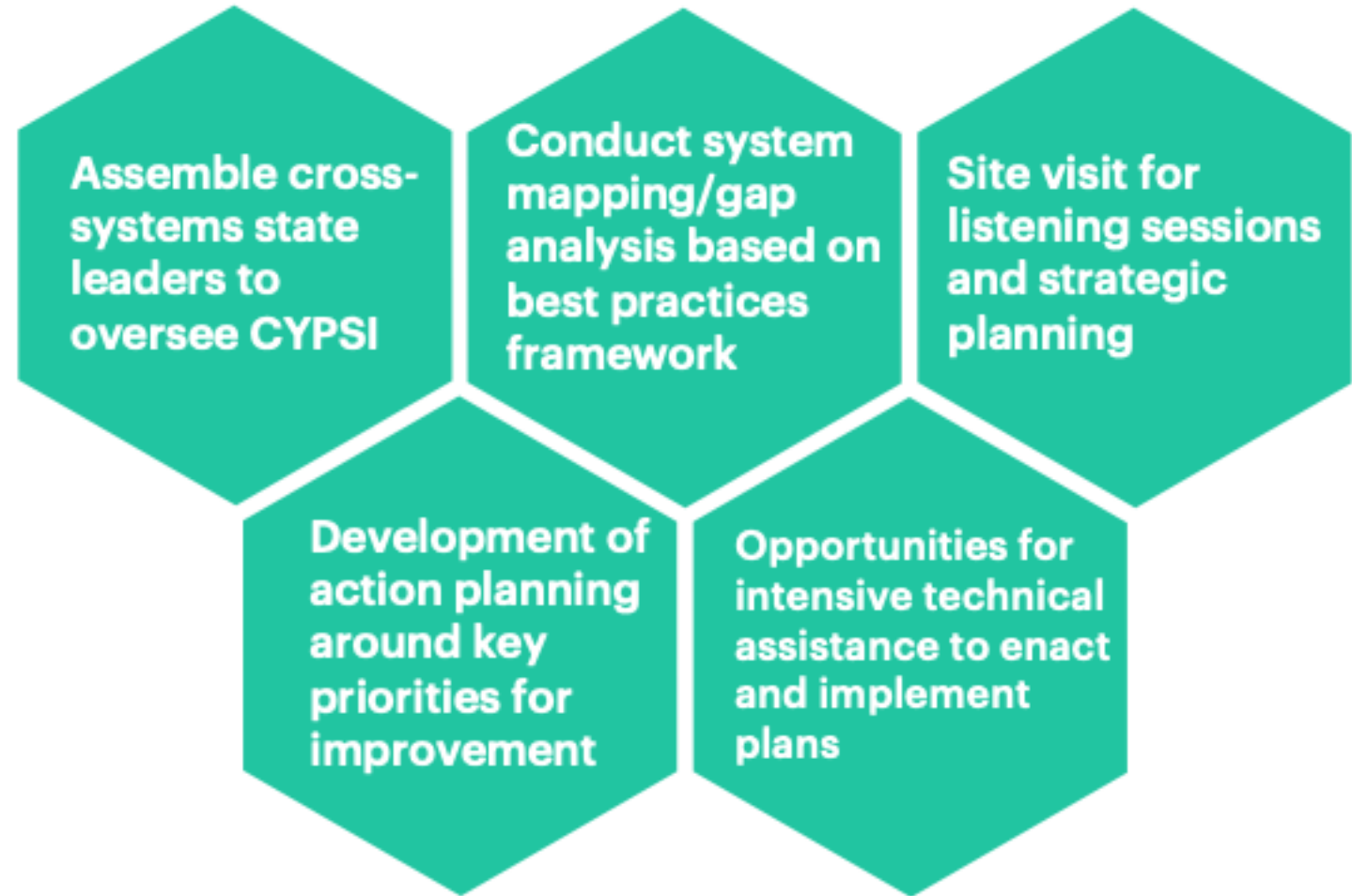
Report moderate or severe staffing challenges among service providers, significantly impacting service availability.

< 10%

Felt their state had a plan to address these staffing challenges.

Collaborating for Youth and Public Safety Initiative (CYPSI)

We have partnered with six states—California, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, and Rhode Island—to guide and support them to realize a new, cross-systems vision and approach for improving public safety and youth outcomes.



Goal: Develop a jurisdiction-wide early intervention structure that helps youth and families get the help they need without system involvement.



A place to go when they need help



An alternative to the police when in crisis



An assessment of their needs and warm handoffs to services



A peer and credible messenger support system for guidance



A place to cool off, be safe, and mediate conflict



Services that address a range of needs and that are timely, free, and culturally competent



Opportunities that support youth to achieve a more prosperous and healthier future



Chance to understand and repair any harm caused to victims or communities

Lesson Learned: States and locales have a significant opportunity to develop a more seamless, centralized early intervention assessment and service system for youth and families:

- ✓ Juvenile justice diversion and alternative responders
- ✓ Medicaid including mobile crisis, Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics, intensive in-home, wraparound, and peer supports
- ✓ Family First including evidence-based family therapy, Family Resource Centers, and respite/shelter
- ✓ School-based diversion, truancy reduction, and specialized education services
- ✓ Grassroots mentoring, credible messengers, violence interrupters, and faith-based supports



Strategies for Using Assessment Centers to Strengthen **Prevention, Diversion, and Early Intervention**

ABOUT THE NAC

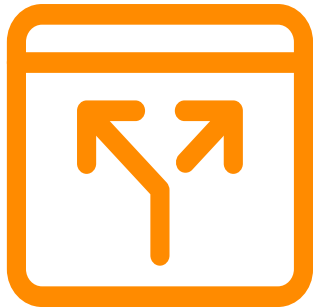


- Our mission is to strengthen communities by helping prevent unnecessary system involvement and connect youth and families to the right supports.
 - Establish and promote best practices
 - Facilitate peer-to-peer networking
 - Provide technical assistance
 - Offer training and resources
 - Advocate with partners at all levels



Diversion
Prevention
~~Assessment~~ Center
Resource
Connection

ASSESSMENT CENTERS



Prevent and divert youth from child welfare and justice systems through a **single point of contact**.



Identify underlying issues contributing to concerning behavior.



Partner with youth and families to access **individualized** services.

SINGLE POINT OF CONTACT



Self-Referral

- Family Conflict
- Runaway
- Mental Health
- Alcohol/Drug Use



School Referral

- Chronic Absenteeism
- Fighting
- Mental Health
- Alcohol/Drug Use



Prevention

Diversion



Law Enforcement

- Criminal Activity
- Misdemeanors
- Status Offenses
- Family Conflict

Pre-arrest Diversion



Child Welfare

- Family Conflict
- Runaway
- Crossover

Early Intervention



Courts

- Criminal Activity
- Status Offenses
- Misdemeanors
- Felonies
- Alternatives to Detention

Pre-file or Pre-adjudication Diversion

SCREENING AND ASSESSMENT

Engage	Screen (Assess)	Refer	Navigate
Using Motivational Interviewing , Assessment Center staff build trust with youth and families.	• Basic Needs • Behavioral Health • Community Safety • Trauma Exposure and Reactions • Suicidal Ideations • Commercial Sex and Labor Exploitation • Physical Safety (abuse/neglect)	Families and youth with identified needs for support may be referred to resources in the community	Families & youth receive ongoing support to overcome accessibility barriers and ensure quality of connections.



CASE MANAGEMENT

NEUTRALITY BUILDS TRUST

NEUTRAL MODEL



Builds trust



Clear referral pathways



Encourages collaboration

SERVICE PROVIDER MODEL



May be perceived as biased



Program driven



Can limit options

ROLE OF INTERVENTION MAPPING



An iterative process that helps communities understand...



... how individuals encounter and move through system processes.

- Why
- How
- Decision Points
- Who is Involved



To identify opportunities for prevention, diversion, and early Intervention.



WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

- Facilitates a better understanding among stakeholders of how youth and families are referred to systems processes
 - Facilitates community consensus among stakeholders on identification of opportunities for early intervention and improved responses to behavior concerns.
 - Increases communication across systems and between community stakeholder groups to facilitate early intervention and access to community-based supports.
-

QUANTITATIVE

Data-Informed Process

COMMUNITY

**LAW
ENFORCEMENT**

DETENTION

SCHOOL

- TRUANCY
- DISCIPLINE
- EXPLUSION

COURT

- INTAKE
- DIVERSION
- FORMAL

CHILD WELFARE



QUALITATIVE

Stakeholder-Informed Process

**IMPACTED YOUTH
AND FAMILIES**

SCHOOL

**LAW
ENFORCEMENT
OFFICERS**

DETENTION

**COURT (JUDGES,
INTAKE,
PROBATION)**

**SERVICE
PROVIDERS**

**FAITH-
COMMUNITY**

CHILD WELFARE

ROLE OF ASSETS MAPPING

- A process that thoroughly reviews the available community services and support, and maps:
 - Who they serve (eligibility)
 - How referrals are made
 - What services are provided
 - Outcomes



WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

- It allows for community consensus on the availability of services and the decision points, or flow, of services offered within a community.
- Allows for community consensus on gaps in community-based services and supports
- Identifies the network for Assessment Centers to connect youth and families to in the community

ASSETS MAPPING

- “Who they serve”
- “How referrals are made”
- “What services are provided”
- “What outcomes are measured”

- Mental health—youth, family
- Substance use—youth, family
- Trauma—youth, family
- Peer support
- Healthcare—hospitals, clinics
- Educational assistance and advocacy
- Job training and placement services
- Recreational programs (e.g., arts, sports)
- Housing
- Benefits and basic needs (i.e., food, utilities, health insurance)
- Life skills training programs
- Mentoring programs
- Respite and support services for caregivers
- Restorative justice programs
- Parent support
- Other



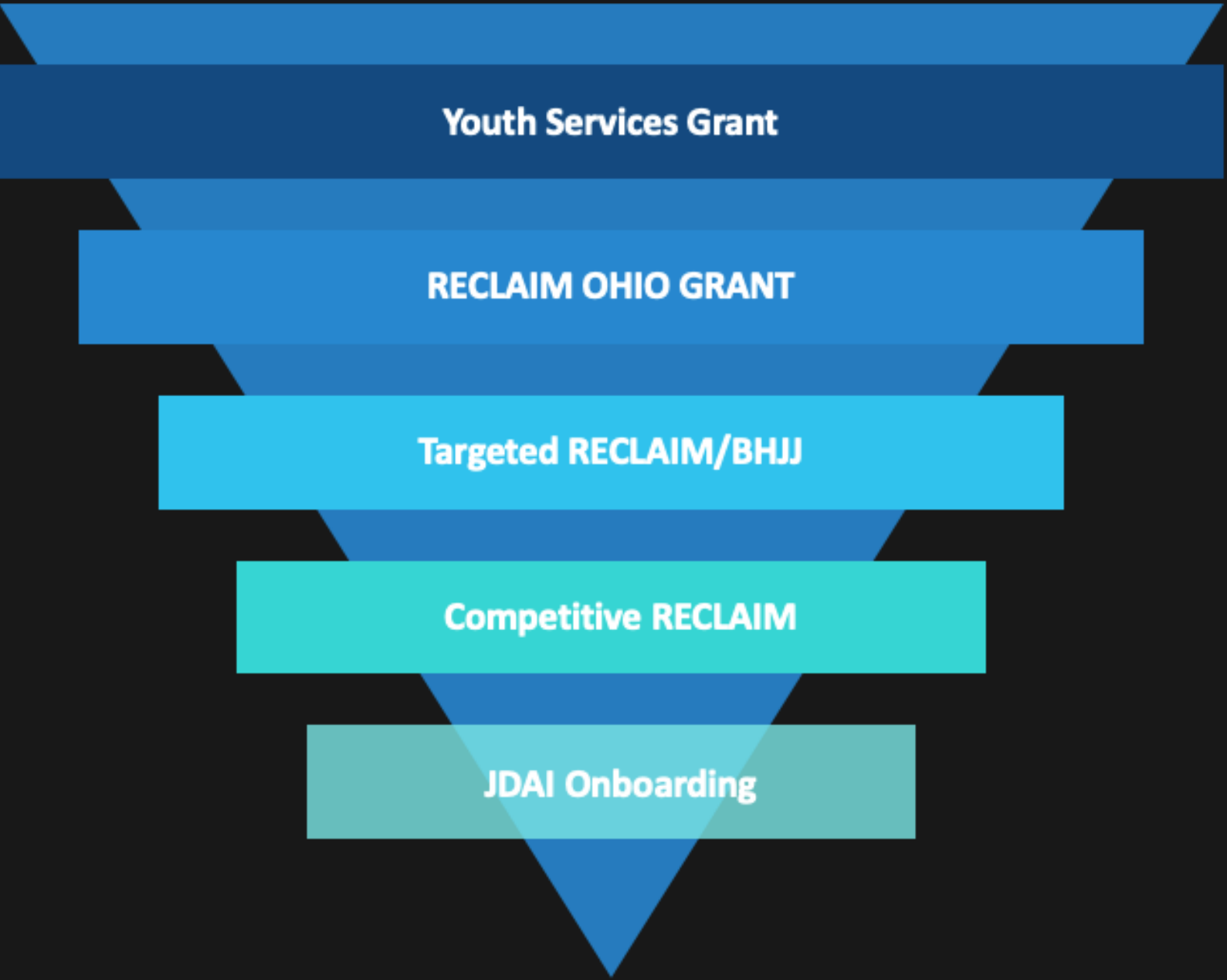
WHERE TO BEGIN

- Identify the problem to be solved.
 - Clarify what behavior(s), system bottleneck(s), or other challenges your community is trying to address.
 - Use data and community voices.
 - Combine quantitative (system data) and qualitative (youth/family input) to shape design.
 - Use data and community to build shared understanding of how current system processes work to identify opportunities
 - Develop shared pathways across systems to establish a hub (single point of contact)
 - Align language, roles, and processes across systems (schools, law enforcement, child welfare, courts) to prevent, divert, and provide early intervention.
 - Strengthen prevention and diversion through collaboration.
 - Identify what resources already exist before building new ones.
 - Clarify referral criteria, eligibility, capacity, and service gaps.
-

OHIO ASSESSMENT CENTERS

A State Scale Approach





Youth Services Grant

RECLAIM OHIO GRANT

Targeted RECLAIM/BHJJ

Competitive RECLAIM

JDAI Onboarding

BUREAU OF
COMMUNITY
REINVESTMENT
FUNDING SOURCES

Competitive RECLAIM Grant Resource/Assessment Center Awards

**Two (2) years of grant
funding awarded to
selected county juvenile
courts.**

**Grants are limited up to
\$175,000 per year, and if
additional funds are
needed, extensive
justification is required.**

Our Vision For Resource & Assessment Centers

To create a community-based, single-point of contact where youth and families have access to screens, assessments, and linkage to resources and services focused on their basic needs

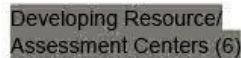
To serve as a diversion from formal court processing

To create a community-based alternative to secure detention





**MAJORITY OF THE 23 CENTERS STARTED IN THE
LAST SIX (6) YEARS**



IN OHIO, THERE ARE 23
RESOURCE AND ASSESSMENT
CENTERS IN 23 DIFFERENT
COUNTIES.
EACH CENTER IS INDEPENDENTLY
RUN, THOUGH MANY ARE STATE
SUPPORTED.

DATA REPORTING EXPECTATIONS

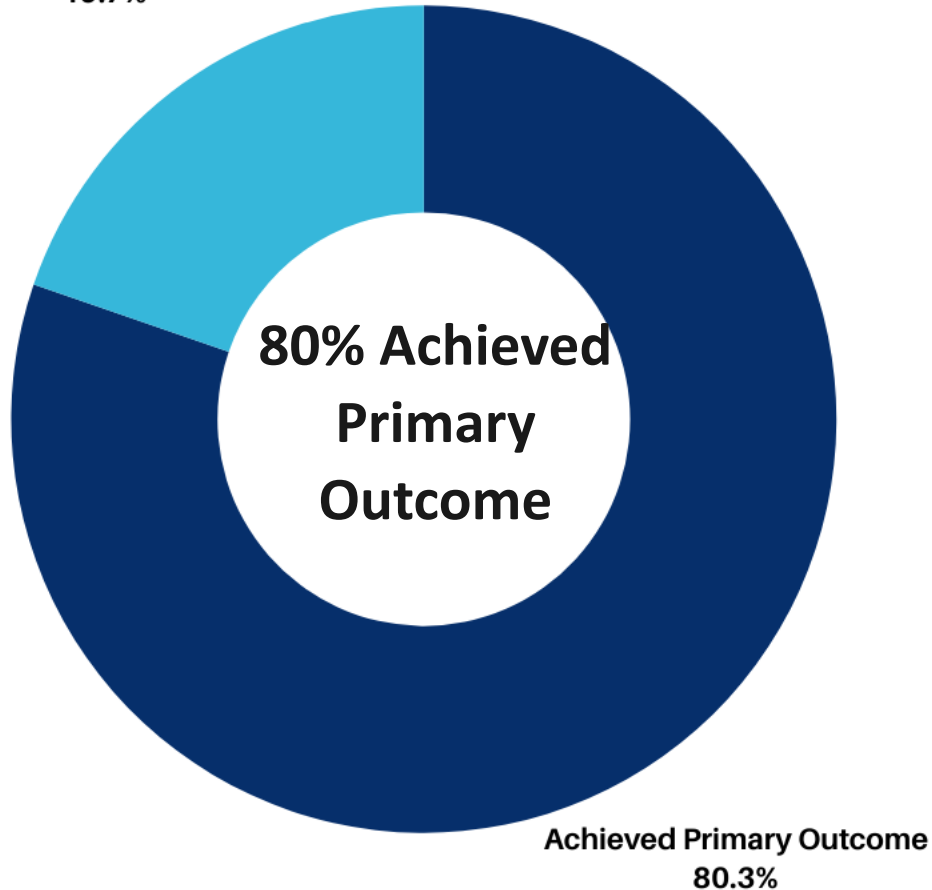


WHILE THESE CENTERS ARE STATE SUPPORTED, EACH ARE LOCALLY RUN AND OPERATED BY JUVENILE COURTS AND COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS

Each center varies in functionality based upon the unique needs of their communities

DIVERSION	CLOTHING & TOILETRIES	COMMUNITY LINKAGE	RECEPTION IN LIEU OF DETENTION
EARLY INTERVENTION SERVICES	MEALS	MENTAL HEALTH/AOD ASSESSMENT LINKAGE	SCREENS AND/OR ASSESSMENTS
CASE MANAGEMENT	TRANSPORTATION	FAMILY NAVIGATION	CRISIS INTERVENTION
MEDIATION	GED INFORMATION AND REGISTRATION	PARENTING CLASSES	
	PEDIATRIC CARE	LIFE SKILLS TRAINING	

Did Not Achieve Primary Outcome
19.7%



Of the 4,219 youth whose outcomes could be measured in 2024 Fiscal Year, 80% achieved their primary outcome.

*Primary outcome is a 12-month post-completion measure that typically tracks some form of recidivism.

WHAT WE ENVISION FOR WHAT'S NEXT



**EXPANSION OF RESOURCE
AND ASSESSMENT CENTERS
IN DIFFERENT COUNTIES,
BUT ALSO MULTIPLE WITHIN
THE SAME COUNTY**



**INCREASED COLLABORATION
WITH OTHER STATE
PARTNERS**



**CENTERS THAT ARE
COMMUNITY RUN AND
COURT SUPPORTED**



**ENHANCED DATA
COLLECTION & REPORTING
THROUGH ACORN**