

# RACE, ADOLESCENCE, AND TRAUMA



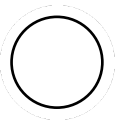
**Prof. Kristin Henning**  
Blume Professor of Law  
Director, Juvenile Justice Clinic & Initiative  
Georgetown Law



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## ROADMAP

- TRAUMA: LIVED AND DEFINED
  - RACIAL TRAUMA
  - TRAUMA IN SCHOOL
  - TRAUMA IN DETENTION
- HOW TRAUMA SHOULD INFORM POLICY QUESTIONS INCLUDING PUBLIC SAFETY



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## THE “INVISIBLE BACKPACKS”

### Prevalence of Trauma:

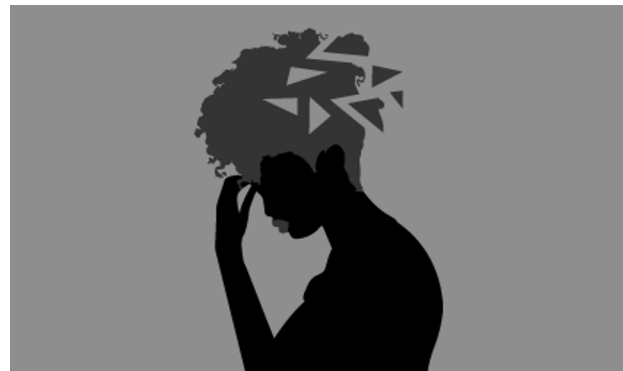
- Approximately 72% of children in the US will have experienced at least one major stressful event, such as witnessing violence, experiencing abuse, or suffering the loss of a loved one by the age of 18.
- 1 in 10 students will be affected by their mental health needs enough to require support services from their school.



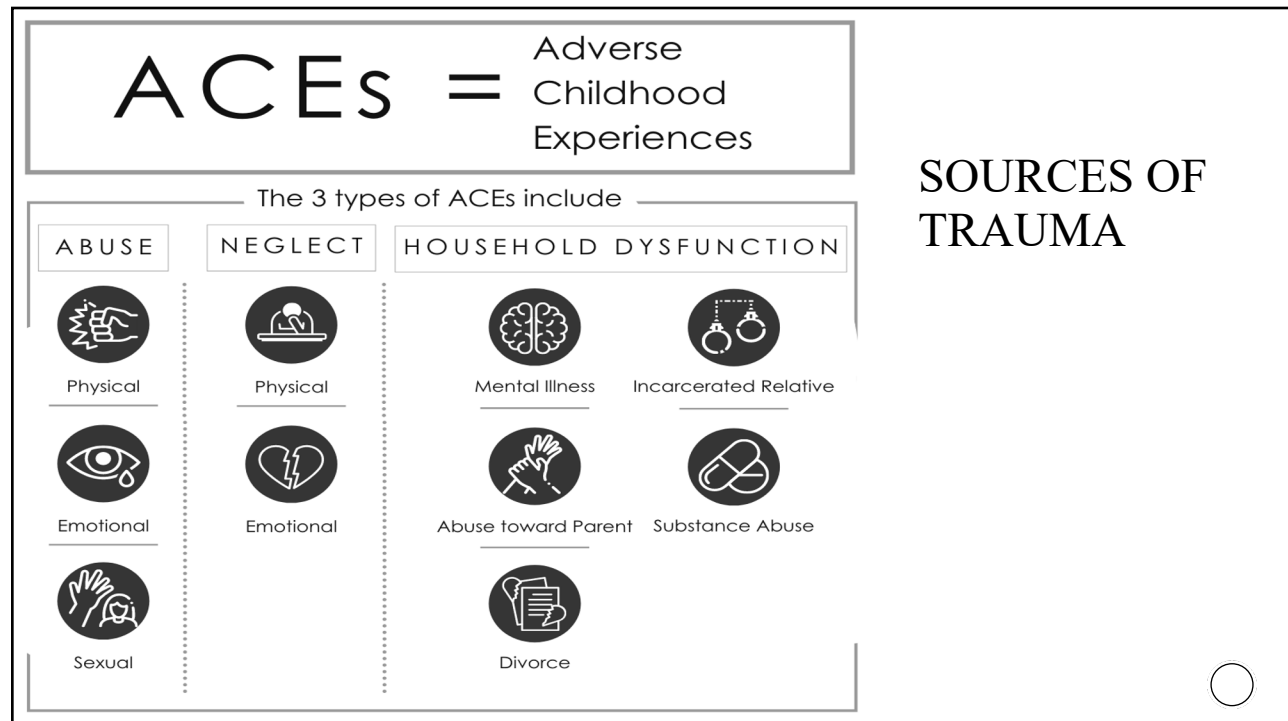
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## TRAUMA

Any distressing or disturbing experience that causes significant fear, helplessness, confusion, or other disruptive feelings intense enough to have a lasting negative effect on a person's attitudes, behaviors, and social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.




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# RACIAL TRAUMA

**Racial trauma or race-based traumatic stress is the cumulative effects of racism on an individual's mental and physical health.**



UNIVERSITY COUNSELING CENTER  
STUDENT AFFAIRS

### WHAT IS RACIAL TRAUMA?

Emotional or physical pain that results from experiences of racism. It involves ongoing and collective injuries due to exposure and re-exposure to experiences of racial discrimination.

### YOU MIGHT EXPERIENCE








- Anger
- Sadness
- Fear
- Numbness
- Disconnection
- Hypervigilance
- Increased sensitivity to threat
- Anxiety
- Tension
- Intrusive thoughts or images
- Decreased immune system functioning
- Difficulty focusing or concentrating
- Irritability

### RESOURCES

University Counseling Center  
www.gvsu.edu/counsel | (616) 331-3266

- Teletherapy for currently enrolled GVSU students
- Black Student Support Resources at www.gvsu.edu/counsel/blacksupport

### SELF-CARE

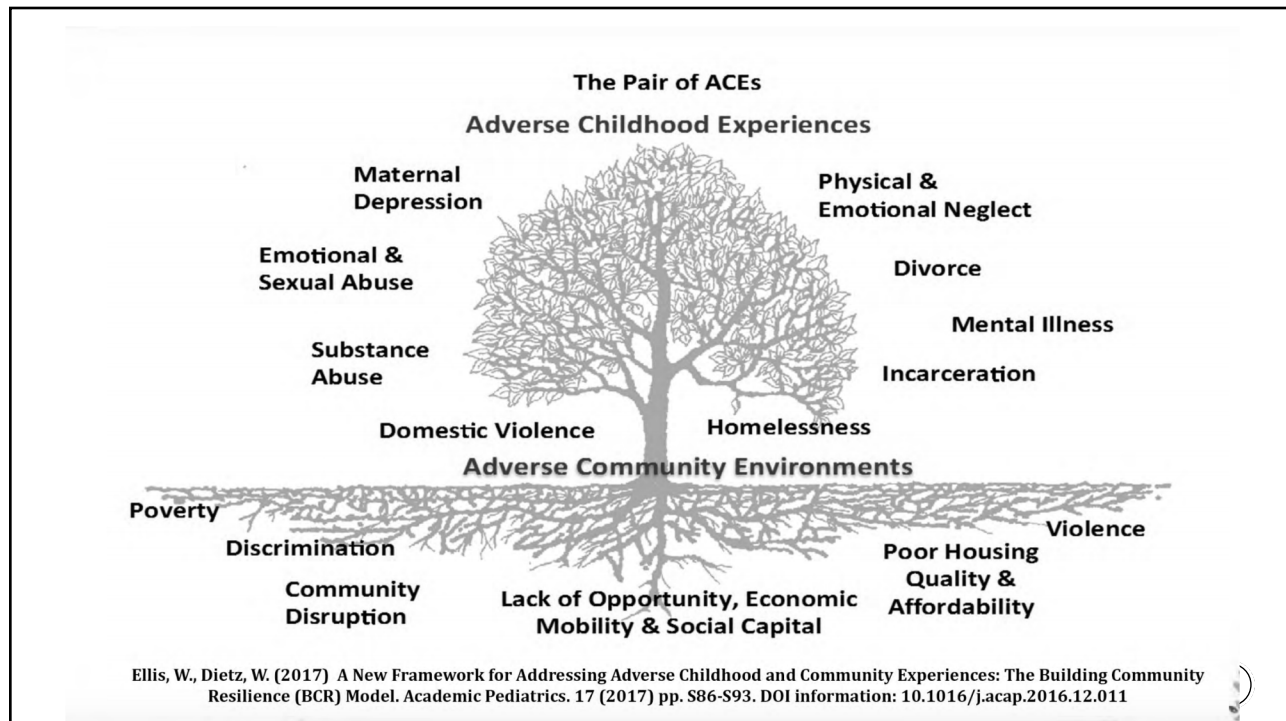
-  Take a break from social media and news
-  Do things that make you feel safe and happy
-  Acknowledge and validate your own feelings (anger, fear, and sadness are normal responses to racial trauma)
-  Communicate/share your feelings with those who can support you
-  Plan activities that promote a healthy mind, body, and spirit
-  Journal your thoughts and feelings
-  Share personal stories of racial experiences with people you trust

**Office of Multicultural Affairs**  
www.gvsu.edu/oma

**Division of Inclusion and Equity**  
www.gvsu.edu/inclusion

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## DAILY DISCRIMINATORY EXPERIENCES

**RESEARCHERS IN A 2020 STUDY FOUND THAT BLACK TEENAGERS AGE 13 TO 17 IN WASHINGTON, DC FACED AN AVERAGE OF FIVE RACIALLY DISCRIMINATORY EXPERIENCES PER DAY.**

### PERCEIVED RACISM LEADS TO

- DEPRESSION AND TRAUMA
- HYPER-VIGILANCE
- PANIC
- HEIGHTENED SENSITIVITY TO THREATS
- DISTRUST
- SUBSTANCE ABUSE
- SHAME
- SELF HARM

Devin English et al., *Daily Multidimensional Racial Discrimination Among Black U.S. American Adolescents*, 66 *J. Applied Dev. Psychol.* (2020).

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## TRAUMA AS A LIVED EXPERIENCE



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## SILENT BEATS



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# TRAUMA & POLICING IN THE MEDIA

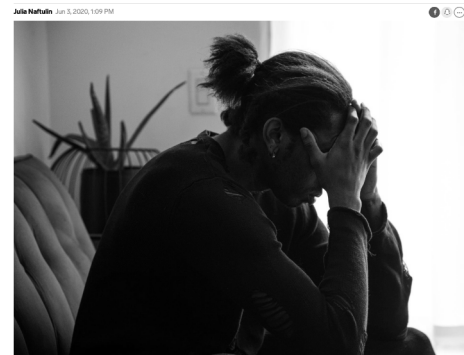


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## RACE-RELATED TRAUMATIC EVENTS ONLINE

- **Study:** Assessed whether viewing race-related traumatic events online (TEO) was associated with depressive and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms. The national sample included 302 African American and Latinx adolescents between 11-19 years old.
- **Results:** There is a significant association between TEO and both PTSD symptoms and depressive symptoms. PTSD symptoms included re-experiencing, hyperarousal, and numbing.

Police brutality imagery on social media can cause lasting trauma, especially for black people



Brendesha M. Tynes et al., *Race-Related Traumatic Events Online and Mental Health Among Adolescents of Color*, 65 J. Adolescent Health 371 (2019).



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## PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EMOTIONAL TRAUMA FROM STOP & FRISKS



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## EFFECTS ON MENTAL HEALTH

- **Study:** Young men aged 18 to 26 years old in New York City reported how many times they were approached by New York Police Department officers, what these encounters entailed, any trauma they attributed to the stops, and their overall anxiety.
- **Findings:** Young men reporting police contact, particularly more intrusive contact, displayed higher levels of anxiety and trauma associated with their experiences.



Amanda Geller, et al., *Aggressive Policing and the Mental Health of Young Urban Men*, 104(12) Am. J. Pub. Health 2321-2327 (2014)



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## VICARIOUS POLICE CONTACTS AND STRESS

Watching police violence is almost as traumatizing as experiencing it.

- **Study:** Focused on attitudes toward police by black undergraduate students (66 women, 35 men) ages 16 to 21.
- **Results:**
  - Witnessing the police use excessive force during an arrest, was associated with greater stress levels.
  - Vicarious contact produced similar stress levels as direct contact.
  - Male college students reported significantly greater stress across all types of police contact than did their female counterparts.

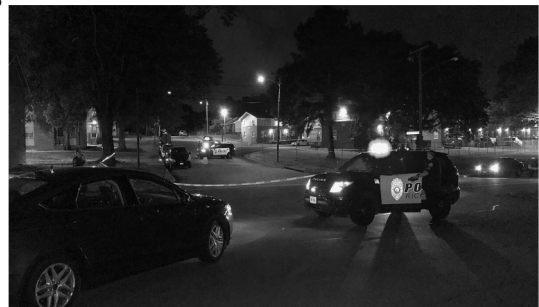
Amber J. Landers et al., *Police Contacts and Stress Among African American College Students*, 81 Am. J. Orthopsychiatry 72 (2011).



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## POLICE STOPS AND SLEEP BEHAVIORS

- **Study:** Examined the association between exposure to police stops and sleep behaviors of 3,444 U.S. youth.
- In the study, youth reported their:
  - exposure to vicarious and direct police stops,
  - police intrusiveness during police stops, and
  - experiences of social stigma and post-traumatic stress following the stop.
- **Results:** Youth who reported exposure to police stops exhibited significantly greater odds of sleep deprivation and low sleep quality.



Dylan B. Jackson et al., *Police Stops and Sleep Behaviors Among At-Risk Youth*, J. Nat. Sleep Foundation (2020).



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## ADOLESCENT IDENTITY: PERCEPTIONS OF SELF AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE POLICE

For poor, young black youth who live in high-surveillance neighborhoods, police contact is a routine feature of their adolescent lives and

- Injures their "sense of self."
- Undermines perceptions of the fairness and legitimacy of police



Nikki Jones, "The Regular Routine": Proactive Policing an Adolescent Development Among Young, Poor Black Men, 143 New Directions Child and Adolescent Dev. 33 (2014).



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## CRIMINOGENIC EFFECTS OF POLICING ON ADOLESCENTS



**stops**



**distress**



**delinquency**

- Adolescent Black and Latino boys who were stopped by police reported more frequent engagement in delinquent behavior at 6, 12, & 18 months after the stop than boys who were not stopped by the police (independent of prior delinquency).
- More frequent stops lead to greater concurrent distress and greater concurrent delinquency.

Toro et al., *The Criminogenic and Psychological Effects of Police Stops on Adolescent Black and Latino Boys*, 116 PNAS, 8261 (2019).



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## STUDENT SURVEY: BARRIERS TO WELLNESS



BOSTON, CHICAGO, DENVER, ST. PAUL, AND PHILADELPHIA

Center for Promise, *Barriers to Wellness: Voices and Views from Young People in Five Cities* (Washington, D.C.: America's Promise Alliance, 2016).

- POOR POLICE-YOUTH RELATIONS
- GENTRIFICATION
- UNEMPLOYMENT
- LACK OF COMMUNITY RESOURCES

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## LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF RACE-RELATED TRAUMA ON PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

A review of studies confirms the strong association between child and adolescent exposure to racial discrimination and negative health and wellbeing outcomes.



Leah Cave et al., *Racial Discrimination and Child and Adolescent Health in Longitudinal Studies: A Systematic Review*, 250 *Social Science & Medicine* (2020).

- **Physical health:** cortisol levels, obesity, injury, asthma, etc.
- **Mental health:** anxiety, body image, conduct disorder, depression, emotional difficulties, resilience, etc.
- **Health-harming behaviors:** diet, exercise, substance use, sleep difficulties, etc.
- **Behavior problems:** anger, delinquent behavior, risk-taking behavior, etc.

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## LONG-TERM EFFECTS OF POLICING ON PHYSICAL HEALTH

- Findings: Living in neighborhoods where pedestrian stops are more likely to become invasive is associated with worse health.
- High blood pressure, diabetes, stroke, ulcers, cognitive impairment, autoimmune disorders, accelerated aging, and early death



Abigail A. Sewell & Kevin Jefferson, *Collateral Damage: The Health Effects of Invasive Police Encounters in New York City*, 93 J. Urb. Health 42-67 (2016).



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## RACE AND TRAUMA IN SCHOOL ...



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## COPS BUT NO COUNSELORS



### In 2019

- 1.7 Million students attend a school with police but no counselors.
- 6 million students attend a school with police but no school psychologist
- 10 Million students attend a school with police but no school social worker ○

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## MORE POLICE = MORE ARRESTS = MORE RACIAL DISPARITIES



**FUNDING**



**ARRESTS**

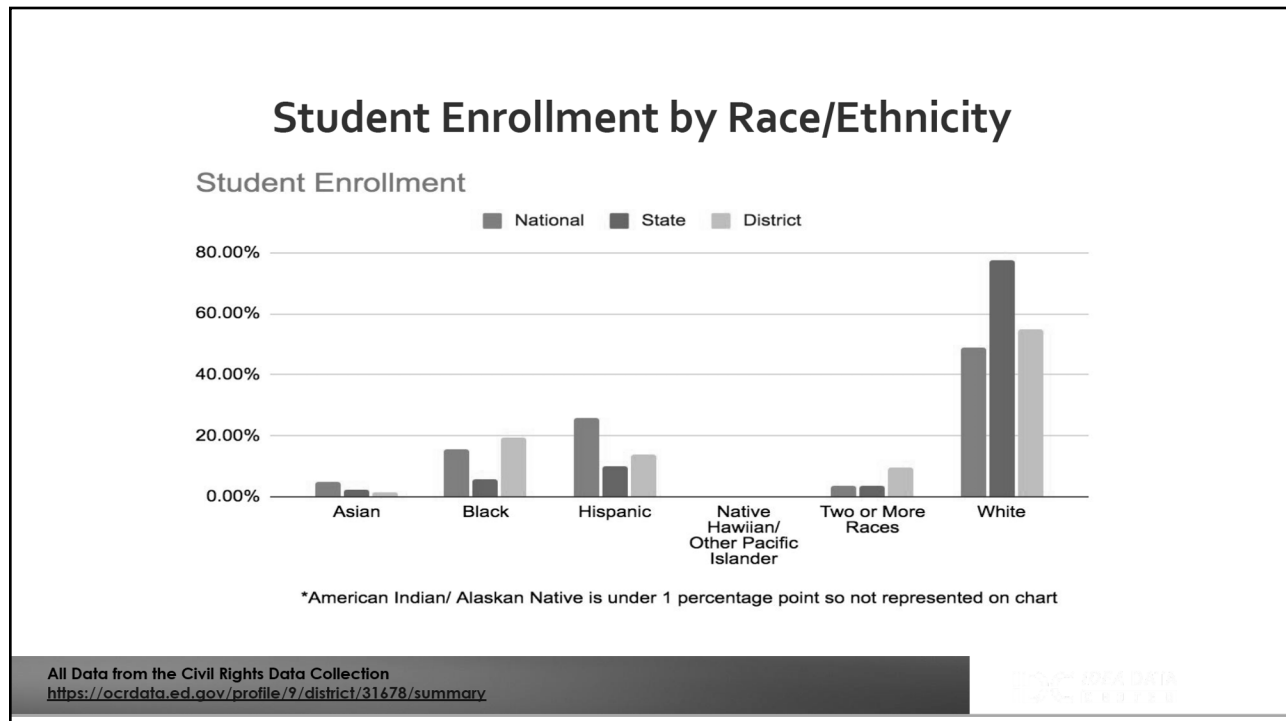


**DISPARITY**

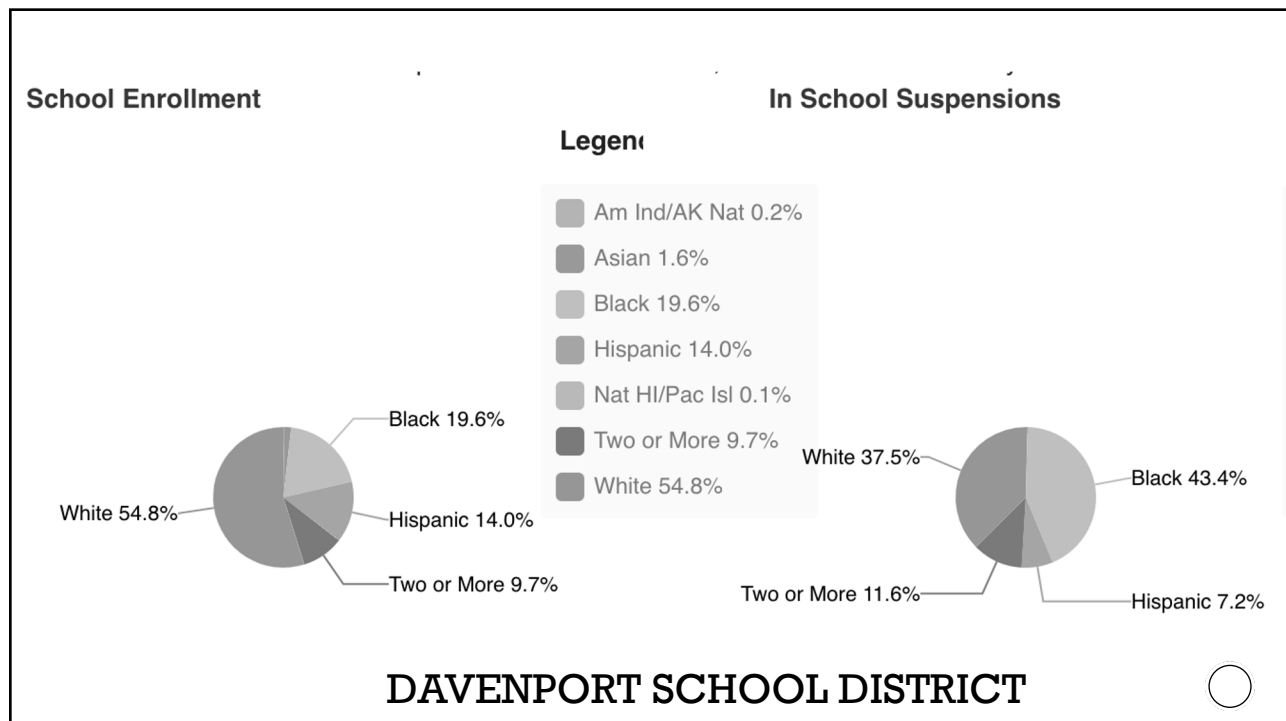


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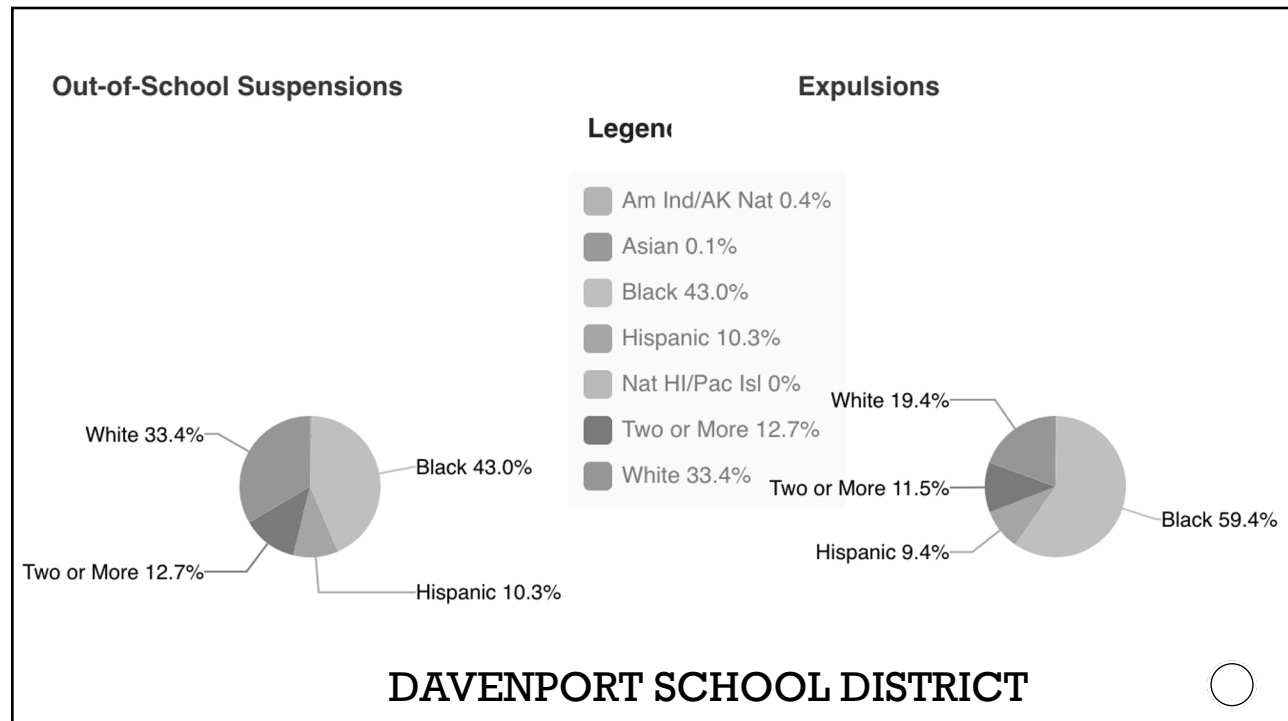




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## Davenport Community School District Days Missed To Out-of-School Suspension

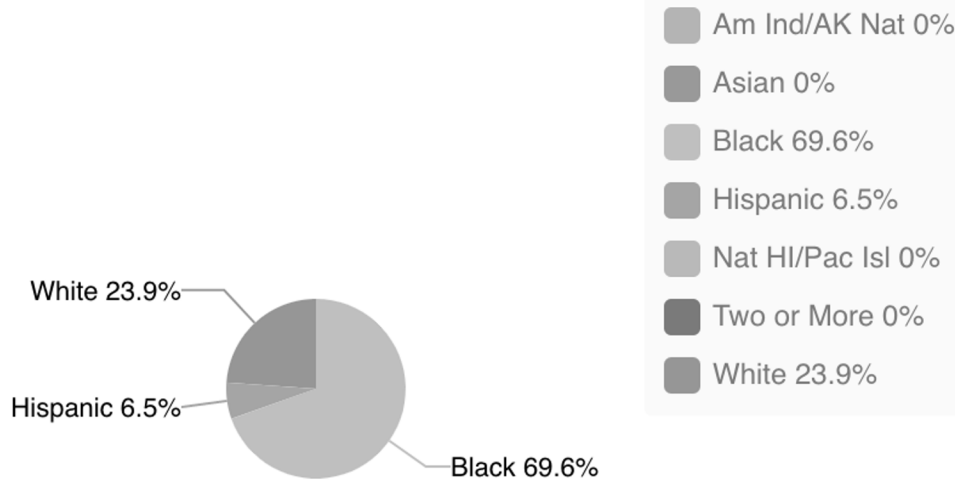
	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Two or More Races	White
Total Student Enrollment	243	2,977	2,127	1,473	9,432
Students With Disabilities Enrollment	22	827	390	320	1,362
Total Days Missed	7	3,531	571	760	1,654
Students With One Day OSS Without Disabilities	2	250	82	90	238
Students With One Day OSS With Disabilities	0	135	25	39	101
Students With More than One Day OSS Without Disabilities	0	167	42	57	150
Students With More than One Day OSS With Disabilities	0	209	34	39	102

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## Referrals to Law Enforcement

## DAVENPORT SCHOOL DISTRICT

### Legend



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## POLICING IN SCHOOLS DOESN'T MAKE US ANY SAFER

- No evidence of crime prevention or increased safety
- Research does not suggest SROs prevent school shootings



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## POLICING IN SCHOOLS UNDERMINES ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND STUDENT WELL BEING

- Criminalization of normal adolescent behaviors
- Poor attendance and lost instruction time
- Poor academic achievement
- Increased criminal/juvenile legal system involvement
- **Increased trauma exposure**

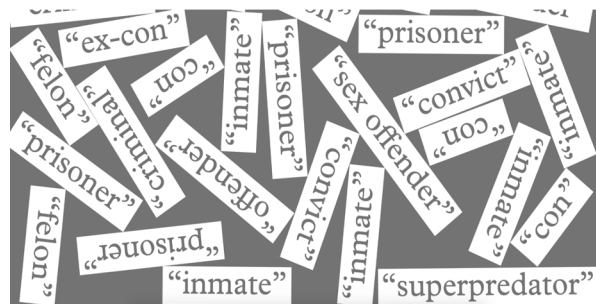


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### JOURNEY THROUGH THE SCHOOL HOUSE




### SCHOOL AS EXTENSION OF THE CRIMINAL LEGAL SYSTEM



Misa Kayama et al., "Use of Criminal Justice Language in Personal Narratives of Out-of-School Suspensions: Black Students, Caregivers, and Educators," *Children and Youth Services Review* 51 (2015): 26–35

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**Racial Disparities – An Analysis of Three Decision Points in Iowa’s Juvenile Justice System**


The Three Decision Points:

- Initial Referral to Juvenile Court Services Page 3
- Juvenile Offenders in Detention for Probation Violations Page 6
- Juvenile Offenders Being Prosecuted as Adults Page 9

November, 2020

Multiple CJJP staff, each with unique expertise in research, data, and juvenile justice policy, joined forces to compile the necessary elements for this comprehensive report.

Iowa Department of Human Rights – Division of Criminal and Juvenile Justice Planning  
Statistical Analysis Center  
Steve Michael, Administrator  
321 E. 12<sup>th</sup> Street  
Des Moines, IA 50319  
(515) 242-5823  
<https://humanrights.iowa.gov>

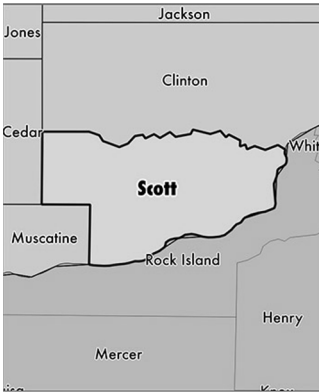



## RACIAL DISPARITIES IN JUVENILE JUSTICE

- Initial Referrals to Juvenile Court
- Referrals to Secure Detention
- Waivers to Adult Court

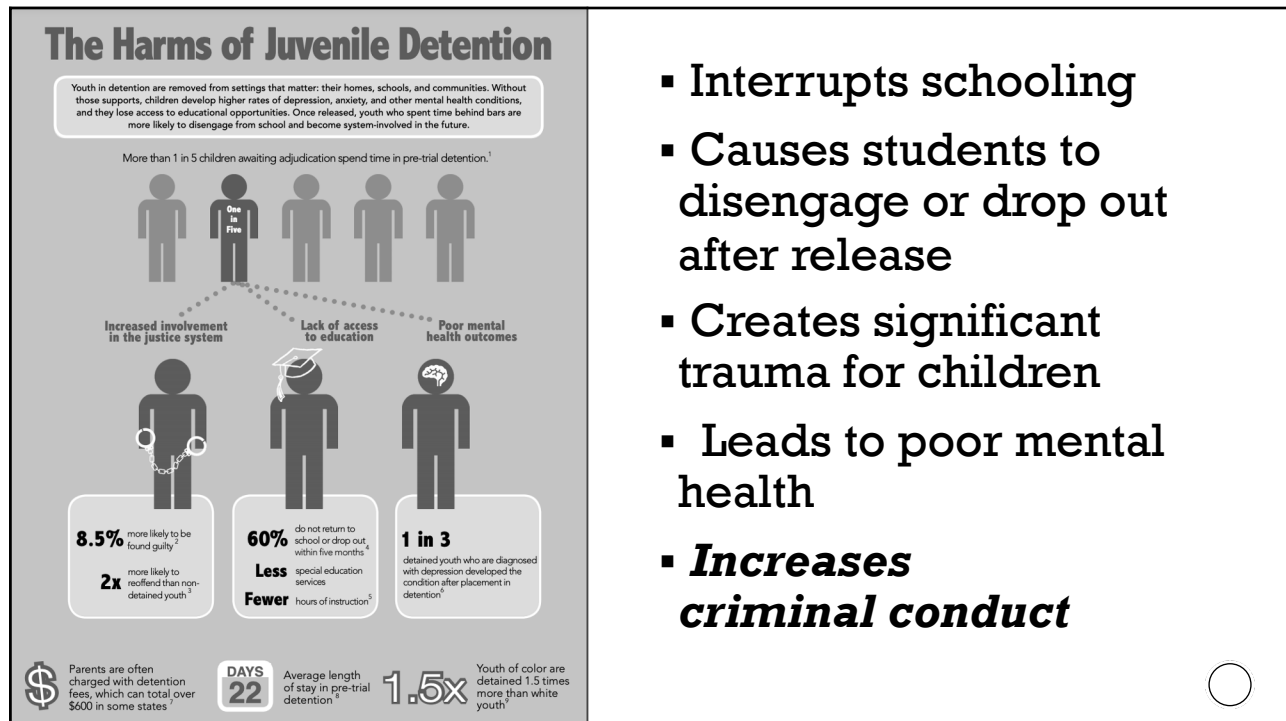
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## SCOTT COUNTY DETENTION DATA

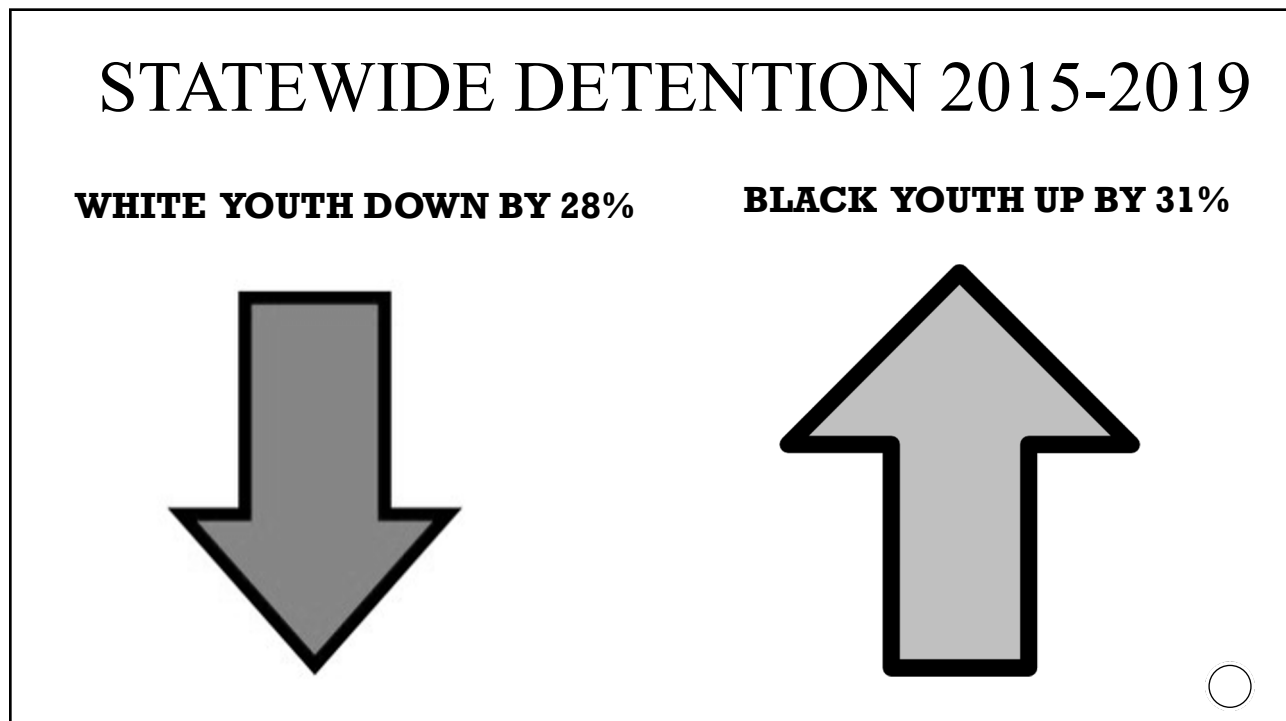



- 70% of children in detention are Black
- more than 80% are youth of color
- 58% of children are there on property/drug crimes
- more than half ended up back at home as the outcome of their case

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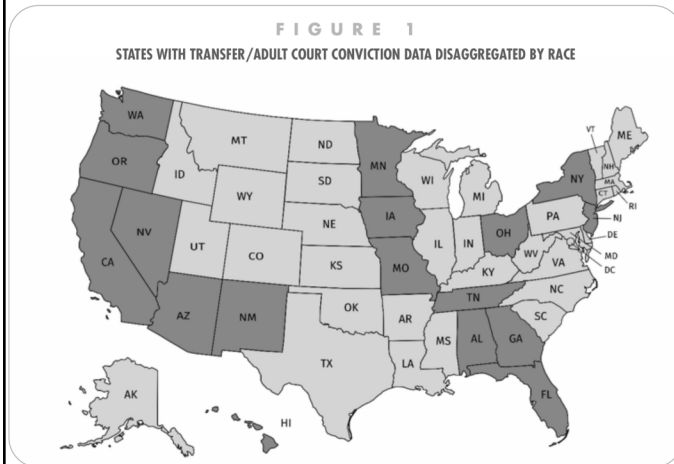


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## STATEWIDE RACIAL DISPARITIES IN TRANSFER OF YOUTH TO ADULT COURT



- Black children are **10 times more likely** than white children to be waived to adult court by a judge and
- **14 times more likely** to be direct filed by a prosecutor

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### ESSENCE OF INNOCENCE: CONSEQUENCES OF DEHUMANIZING BLACK CHILDREN (2014)

- ❑ Among the general public:
  - ❑ Participants perceived African American youth felony suspects as **4.53 years older** than they actually were
- ❑ Among law enforcement:
  - ❑ Participants also rated African American youth felony suspects as **4.59 years older** than they actually were
- ❑ Among both general public and law enforcement
  - ❑ Participants perceived white youth as **less culpable** when suspected of a felony than when suspected of a misdemeanor
  - ❑ Participants perceived black felony suspects as significantly **more culpable** than either white felony suspect or Latino felony suspects



Goff, P.A., et al. (2014). The essence of innocence: Consequences of dehumanizing Black children, *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology*, 106, 526-545.

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## RACIAL TRAUMA DURING INCARCERATION

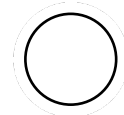
- Isolation, constant scrutiny of guards, lack of privacy, as well as witnessing and experiencing violence, are all traumatic.
- PTSD, panic attacks, depression, and paranoia may be caused by incarceration.
- Guards may hurl racial epithets and single out people of specific races.
- Parallels to slavery, such as being separated from family, referred to as a number, paid a pittance for labor, denied adequate nutrition, all add additional trauma.



Mikai'l DeVeaux, *The Trauma of the Incarceration Experience*, 48 Harv. C.R.-C.L. L. Rev. 257 (2013).

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## HOW DO WE USE THIS INFORMATION TO DRIVE CHANGE?



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## STARTS WITH HOW WE TALK TO AND ABOUT YOUNG PEOPLE

## AVOID DEHUMANIZING LANGUAGE:

### PART I: Responding to Normal Adolescent and Trauma-Related Behaviors in Court

"Everything we see hides another thing."  
Rene Magritte

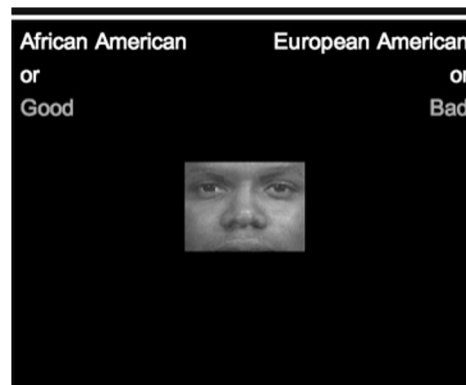
Below we offer examples of common behaviors that may be observed in juvenile court, reflect on possible causes, and offer responses. These are not answers, just sample frameworks for improving interactions with young people in juvenile court.

WHAT BEHAVIOR DO I SEE?	HOW DOES THAT MAKE ME FEEL?	WHAT MIGHT BE UNDERNEATH THE BEHAVIOR?	WHAT WILL I DO IN RESPONSE?
Negative body language (crossed arms, rolling eyes, refusal to stand/sit/make eye contact, etc.)	Disrespected	Youth may display what appears to be oppositional body language because of traumatic experiences or language deficiencies that make it difficult to appropriately express and articulate their thoughts or feelings. A youth's body language may also indicate feelings of stress, nervousness, unfairness, fear, or embarrassment, especially when the young person's peers, rivals, or family members are watching in the courtroom.	Be patient, listen well, have empathy, and de-escalate situations as they arise.
Defiance Mouthing off Talking back	Insulted	Youth do not always have the language skills to express how they feel and/or the skillset to express disagreement. They may find it difficult to appropriately express their emotions, especially in front of their peers and other people in the courtroom.	Consider saying, "I know it's hard to be here in court, we all want to ensure..."
Disruptive or distracting behavior Disassociation	Angry Frustrated	Studies show that trauma may affect a youth's ability to control impulses or perceive risks associated with their behaviors, meaning that they may be unable to meet adults' expectations for their behavior, rather than unwilling. Youth who have experienced trauma may have learned to use compliance or defiance as survival mechanisms. Punitive sanctions are unlikely to change trauma-related behaviors. Instead, treatment for underlying or ongoing trauma and supports that help youth control impulses and manage their anger may be more effective responses to disorderly conduct.	Give second and third chances for youth struggling to act appropriately in court. For instance, when a young person has an outburst, rather than escalating the situation with threatened sanctions, give youth an opportunity to step outside with their attorney to calm their emotions, and re-call the case later.
Emotional outbursts Frustration	Irritated Frustrated	Youth are particularly sensitive to issues of fairness and respect and have yet to master tempering their emotions, controlling their impulses, and regulating their behavior, especially in the face of seemingly unfair outcomes. Youth care about procedural justice and expect to be treated with respect and impartiality and be given an opportunity to tell their side of the story and express their own views and opinions. If not given the opportunity to do so, they may express their frustration through emotional outbursts.	
Inability to show remorse Laughing Scoffing Sucking teeth	Hurt Disrespected	Youth who perceive the system as unfair, or who have diminished cognitive capacity, or who have experienced trauma, may struggle to convey contrition and remorse shortly after an arrest or adjudication. Other developmental features of adolescence, such as peer influence and teenage bravado, or simply immaturity, may further inhibit expressions of grief and remorse.	

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## PERCEPTIONS OF HOSTILITY & FRUSTRATION IMPLICIT RACIAL BIAS

- Several studies have found that individuals are more likely to interpret ambiguous behavior by blacks as
  - more aggressive and
  - consistent with violent intentions
- while interpreting the same behavior by whites as harmless.



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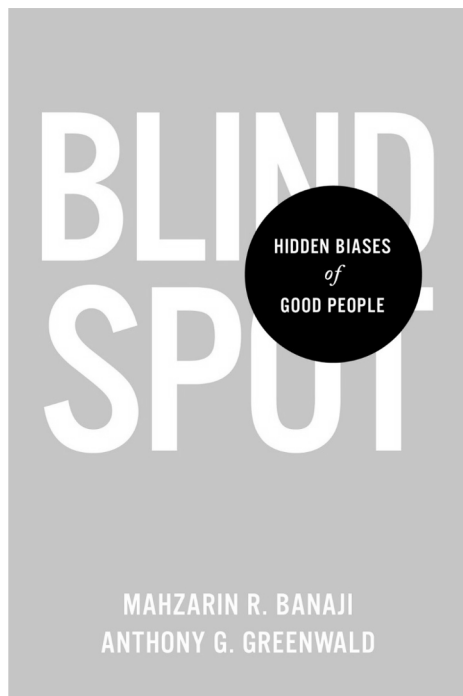
## PRACTICE CULTURAL HUMILITY

- Acknowledge that youth may have been harmed by others in the past and this harm may include racial trauma
- State our intention to earn their trust
- Create safe space for an open and honest conversation about race, trauma, and policing
- Invite youth to hold us accountable by telling us when we have said or done something hurtful
- Listen and meaningfully implement their ideas
- Be aware of how our biases impact our view of a child's expression of emotion, silence, body language, or word choice



Masters C, Robinson D, Faulkner S, Patterson E, McIlraith T, Ansari A., *Addressing Biases in Patient Care with The 5Rs of Cultural Humility, a Clinician Coaching Tool*, 34 J Gen Intern Med. 4, 627-730 (2019). Available: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6445906/>

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Egalitarian Thinkers face a greater risk of a “bias blindspot,” which is the belief that others are biased but we are not. Thinking this way, ironically, leaves us more susceptible to biases.

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# POLICY REFORM



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# LET THEM LEARN: POLICE IN SCHOOLS?

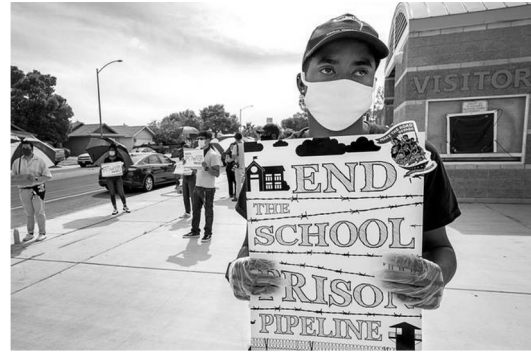


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## REIMAGINE SCHOOL SAFETY

Adopt a holistic, public health approach to school safety that is relational, racially just, restorative, and trauma-responsive

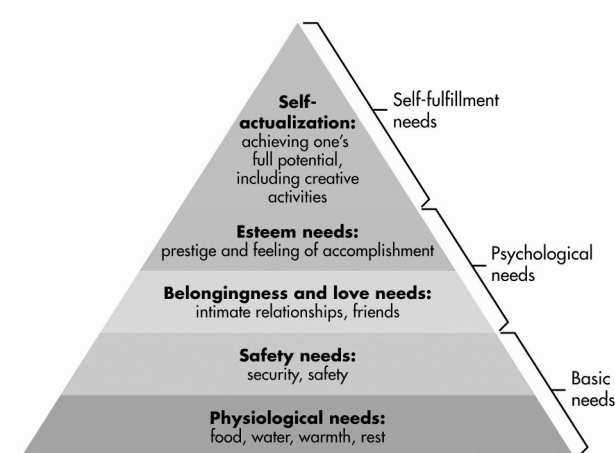
- Counselors
- Social workers
- Mental health professionals
- Peer intervention
- Positive youth interventions
- Social Emotional Learning
- Restorative Justice



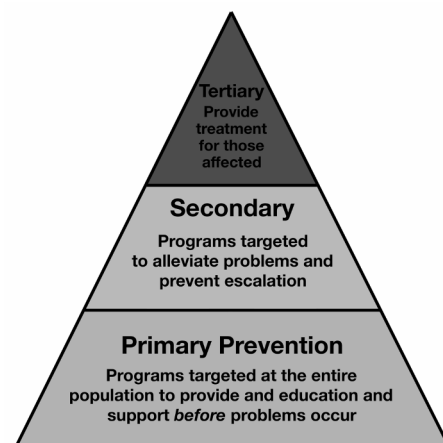
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## INVEST IN YOUTH DIRECTLY

### Invest in Youth Using....



### A Public Health Approach



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## DEVELOPMENTALLY-APPROPRIATE REGULATIONS FOR POLICE

- Training on adolescent development
- De-escalation
- Use of force
- Handcuffing small children
- No Interrogation or Consent Searches without a lawyer

### A LACK OF TRAINING

Policing kids is hard. There's scientific reason for that: kids' brains aren't developed (and won't be until they are in their mid-20s) so they act more impulsively, take risks, and often make bad decisions. But training for encounters with youth amounts to 1% or less of the total training officers receive.

And schools don't teach children how to interact with law enforcement, and even well-meaning advice isn't always the right advice.

ONLY  
1%  
of basic training in police academies  
is spent on juvenile justice issues

ONLY  
8 STATES  
include information about DMJ  
in their juvenile justice curriculum

ONLY  
2 STATES  
provide new officers training on  
teen development and psychology

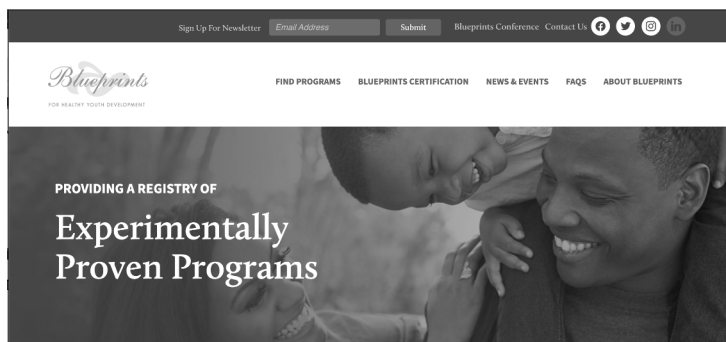
ONLY  
9 STATES  
provide new officers training on  
teen mental health issues

**Strategies for Youth**  
CONNECTING COPS & KIDS®



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## TREAT KIDS LIKE KIDS NO TRANSFER TO ADULT COURT



- MULTISYSTEMIC THERAPY (MST)
- FUNCTIONAL FAMILY THERAPY (FFT)
- AGGRESSION REPLACEMENT THERAPY (ART)
- TRAUMA-FOCUSED COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL THERAPY (CBT)



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# TREAT ALL KIDS THE SAME ALTERNATIVES TO DETENTION



THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

STRATEGIES BLOG A

🏠 > STRATEGIES > JUVENILE JUSTICE > JUVENILE DETENTION ALTERNATIVES INITIATIVE (JDAI) ▼

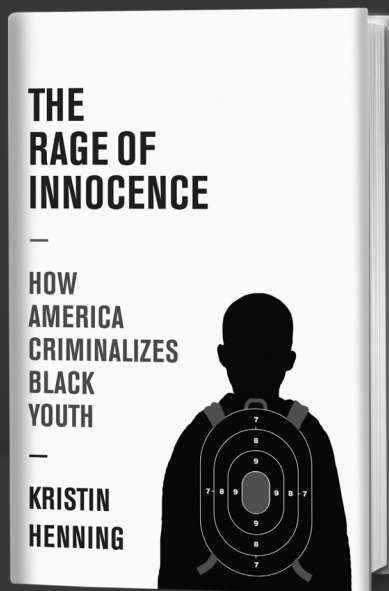
## JUVENILE DETENTION ALTERNATIVES INITIATIVE (JDAI)

JDAI® is a network of juvenile justice practitioners and other system stakeholders across the country working to build a better and more equitable youth justice system.

The Casey Foundation spurs the network to pursue policies and practices in their communities, courts and out-of-home placements that keep young people safe and on track for long-term success, while still holding youth accountable for their actions. The network promotes a data-driven, problem-solving approach and a series of tools that are rooted in core strategies. These strategies are explicit about racial equity to address the glaring overrepresentation of youth of color in the justice system; youth, family and community engagement; and community-based alternatives to confinement.



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