Our Policy

• To drive juvenile justice reform by producing and applying the best available information.

• This philosophy is embodied in our organization which has a reputation for producing and translating juvenile justice data, research and findings to distill the facts of the matter, and for providing cutting-edge and wide-ranging training and technical assistance to judges and justice system professionals on juvenile justice related topics.

Our Work

• The Juvenile Justice Model Data Project is designed to enhance the quality and consistency of justice information to advance juvenile justice reform efforts at the national level through data improvements at the state, local, and tribal levels.

• The NCJFCJ recognizes that judges play a critical role in juvenile justice system reform and promotes reform efforts through its resolutions. The NCJFCJ embraces a developmental approach to juvenile justice reform and has advocated for judicial training on:
  • Adolescent brain development and its application to juvenile probation;
  • Limiting the use of shackles of children in court;
  • Reducing the use of group facilities and increasing oversight of youth confinement facilities;
  • Reducing the use of solitary confinement;
  • Trauma-informed juvenile and family courts that address the needs of homeless youth and families; and
  • Domestic child sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children.

• The NCJFCJ has issued policy statements that address the foundations of juvenile justice in the United States—the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, and the due process rights of children established 50 years ago in the historic Gault decision. The NCJFCJ partnered to develop the Access to Juvenile Justice Irrespective of Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Gender Expression (SOGIE) and applying principles of adolescent development in delinquency proceedings bench cards issued by the National Juvenile Defender Center.

• The NCJFCJ’s research division, the National Center for Juvenile Justice, supported juvenile justice reform through involvement in the MacArthur Foundation’s Models for Change reform initiative. The NCJFCJ applied years of experience as system “insiders” to assist state and local level stakeholders collect, analyze, and report data to document the outcomes of their reform efforts.

• The NCJFCJ’s Juvenile Justice GPS (Geography, Policy, Practice, & and Statistics) website provides state policy makers and system stakeholders a clear understanding of the landscape of reform across the country to both inspire change and find solutions that have been applied in other places. This tool provides the most relevant national and state level statistics with information on legal reform in juvenile justice. In a landscape that is highly decentralized and ever-shifting, JJGPS.org has become an invaluable resource for system reform.

• The NCJFCJ’s Juvenile Drug Treatment Court (JDTC) training and technical assistance project works to improve outcomes for youth handled in juvenile drug courts across the country. To date, the NCJFCJ has worked with 18 JDTC Learning Collaborative sites to assess needs, build capacity, initiate strategic planning, implement appropriate program improvements, evaluate program performance and help sustain programs. Six new sites will be added in 2018. Many of the Learning Collaborative sites will serve as sites to test implementation of the new Juvenile Drug Treatment Court Guidelines.

• Through the School-Justice Partnership initiative, the NCJFCJ provides training and technical assistance to enhance collaboration and coordination among schools, mental and behavioral health specialists, law
enforcement and juvenile justice officials to help students succeed in school and prevent negative outcomes for youth and communities.

- The NCJFCJ works closely with juvenile justice practitioners and policy makers in states and counties to improve outcomes for youth. This work is no more evident than in Pennsylvania as the state worked to reform its juvenile justice system, adopting Balanced and Restorative Justice as its foundation. Other joint work involved: dissemination of reform information (Pennsylvania Progress bulletins), preparation of White Papers on the cornerstones of Balanced and Restorative Justice (competency development, accountability to victims, and community protection), and working with service providers on the Quality Improvement Initiative.

- In 2018, the NCJFCJ was awarded a contract with the Nevada Department of Health and Human Services to develop and maintain the Juvenile Services Evidence Based Program Resource Center, designed to support the implementation and operation of evidence based programs and practices across Nevada. This Center will help provide a consistent approach to reform efforts across the state.

- The NCJFCJ is updating its 2005 publication the Juvenile Delinquency Guidelines: Improving Court Practice in Juvenile Delinquency Cases. The NCJFCJ has engaged members of the original committee that developed the publication and a broad stakeholder group to assist in updating the publication.

Our Results

- Jurisdictions have already begun using the Juvenile Justice Model Data project’s framework to guide and improve their juvenile justice information systems and their use of data.

- The NCJFCJ is helping to lead juvenile justice reform. The NCJFCJ’s resolutions and policy statements carry great weight in the field providing guidance for local judges in their day-to-day work on the bench and justice system professionals.

- The Models for Change Initiative produced many examples of change in varying juvenile justice policy environments and the NCJFCJ still connects stakeholders in other states to these lessons.

- The Juvenile Justice GPS website has become a well-used site for policy makers and advocates alike. Its information has been referenced by task forces, news media, and legislation.

- The NCJFCJ is viewed as a leader in the JDTC field and has been a pivotal partner in the development and research of the OJJDP Juvenile Drug Treatment Court Guidelines.

- The NCJFCJ’s School-Justice Partnership sites have made positive school discipline reforms and significantly reduced the number of student suspensions, expulsions, and referrals to court for non-serious behaviors.

Our Vision for the Future

1. The Juvenile Justice GPS and lessons learned from the NCJFCJ’s projects are broadly disseminated with the goal of reinforcing positive changes for juvenile justice in America.

2. The NCJFCJ remains a critical stakeholder in this process, helping to transfer the best techniques for informing change with strong information and continuous quality improvement cycles and using the NCJFCJ membership as critical leaders for influencing progress toward a better system.

The NCJFCJ recommends federal support for juvenile justice reform efforts, including continued collaboration between OJJDP and private foundations.
Child maltreatment rates are lower than they have been in decades: and 16% lower in 2015 than 2005.

Violent crime arrest rates are lower for today’s juveniles than for their parents’ generation.

Trends in juvenile homicide are driven by changes in murders involving firearms—when youth are the victim or the offender.

Property crime arrest rates are also lowest in decades.

Children sexually assaulted by acquaintances or family are most often assaulted at breakfast or lunch time or just after school.

Delinquency cases peaked in 1997; decreasing 51% since then.

Juvenile violence on school days peaks is right after school. On non-school days, violence peaks at 8 pm.
States continue to “Raise the Age” in an effort to treat youth in developmentally appropriate ways and decrease the number of youth processed in adult courts. Pending implementation, only five states will prosecute law violations of a 17-year-old the same as an adult (GA, MI, MO, TX and WI).

South Carolina “RTA” fully effective 7/19
Louisiana “RTA” effective 7/18 & 7/20
New York “RTA” effective 10/18 & 10/19
North Carolina “RTA” effective 12/19

Purpose clauses are usually written in statute to clarify the intention of the legislature for the state’s juvenile justice system. Most (29) states incorporate Balanced and Restorative Justice principles in their states’ purpose clause.

Risk/need assessment tools have become common practice in juvenile probation settings across the country. A 2016 survey indicates 38 states have a single risk/need assessment tool implemented statewide.

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Routine shackling is allowed in most states during delinquency-related juvenile court proceedings, no matter their age or alleged offense. Routine shackling of adults is prohibited under the Constitution—but not for children.