

# YOUTH **JUSTICE** → ← CONVENING

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## Post-Convening Report

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EMORY  
LAW

Barton Child Law  
and Policy Center

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Final editing was completed by Executive Director Melissa Carter

YOUTH  
**JUSTICE**  
  
CONVENING

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## Youth Justice Convening Agenda

- 8:15 – 9:15**                    **Breakfast**
- 8:45 – 8:55**                    **Welcome**  
Welcome remarks provided by Melissa Carter, Executive Director,  
Barton Child Law & Policy Center, Emory Law School  
Opening provided by DJJ Commissioner Shawanda Reynolds-Cobb
- 8:55 – 9:00**                    **Short Film, Stuck**
- 9:00 – 10:15**                   **Juvenile Justice Data Landscape National and Georgia**  
*Moderator:* Melissa Carter, Executive Director, Barton Child Law & Policy Center,  
Emory Law School  
*Panelists:*  
• Dr. Christy Doyle, Senior Research Associate at the Georgia Health Policy Center of  
Georgia State University  
• Ms. Allyson Richardson, Deputy Commissioner of Administrative Services, DJJ  
• Ms. Windy Hix, Director, Office of Classification, DJJ  
• Ms. Cathy Dravis, Program Coordinator, DJJ  
• Ms. Lesley Kelley, Senior Policy Analyst, Voices for Georgia’s Children  
• Mr. Joe Vignati, Senior Policy Analyst, Voices for Georgia’s Children
- 10:15 – 10:30**                **Break ~ Short Film, Waiting**  
Short film will be played from 10:15 – 10:20
- 10:30 – 12:00**                **Georgia’s Grassroots: The Strengths of Grassroot Programming**  
*Moderator:* Felix Rodriguez, Program Manager of Civic Innovation Fellowships,  
Center for Civic Innovation Atlanta  
*Panelists:*  
• Mr. Omar Howard, Founder, Freedom is a Choice, Atlanta, Georgia  
• Ms. Tekesia Shields, Founder, Mothers Against Gang Violence, Atlanta, Georgia  
• Ms. Najiva Timothee, Founder & Executive Director, Girls Dig Deeper Initiative,  
Macon, Georgia  
• Mr. Julius Campbell, Life Navigator, Deep Center, Savannah, Georgia  
• Ms. Marisa Arnold, Director of Youth Programs, Deep Center, Savannah, GA  
*Young Adult Speakers:*  
• Curtis Trimble  
• Ade’ Ison, Jr.
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## Youth Justice Convening Agenda

- 12:00 – 12:45**                    **Lunch ~ Short Films, Dream and Chillin’**  
Short films will be played from 12:00 – 12:05 and 12:40 – 12:45
- 12:45 – 2:15**                    **Promising Practices: The Research to Practice Continuum of Evidence Based Programming**  
*Moderator:* Dr. Christy Doyle, Senior Research Associate at the Georgia Health Policy Center of Georgia State University  
*Panelists:*
- Dr. Briana Woods-Jaeger, Associate Professor, Rollins School of Public Health, Emory University
  - Dr. Kristine Jolivet, Paul W. Bryant and Mary Harmon Bryant Endowed Professor, University of Alabama
  - Dr. Sara Sanders, Assistant Research Professor, University of Alabama
  - Dr. Gabrielle Chapman, Research Assistant Professor, Department of Human and Organizational Development, Peabody College at Vanderbilt University
- 2:15 – 2:30**                    **Break ~ Short Film, I Care**  
Short film will be played from 2:15 – 2:20
- 2:30 – 3:30**                    **HEY! Let’s Talk About Empowering Youth**  
Presentation by KaCey Venning, Director of HEY! (Helping Empower Youth) that addresses the plight of the “Water Boys” and their pathway to entrepreneurship with HEY! Hydrate
- 3:30 – 3:35**                    **Short Film, Hope**
- 3:35 – 4:00**                    **Endnote Address**  
Endnote address provided by OJJDP Administrator Liz Ryan
- 4:00 – 5:00**                    *Optional:* Audience Meet & Greet with Panelists

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## Introduction

On November 7, 2024, Emory University's Barton Child Law and Policy Center hosted a statewide Youth Justice Convening in Macon, Georgia. This event was designed through consultation with a multi-disciplinary planning committee and funding provided by the Public Welfare Foundation, Emory University, and the Coalition for Juvenile Justice. The goal for the Convening is to influence the context in which policy change takes place by engaging stakeholders in critical conversations about youth justice that challenge their thinking around how success for system-involved youth is defined by considering data, centering lived experience, and critically reflecting on current investments in the well-being of Georgia's youth. Agenda topics and speakers were selected with three primary objectives in mind: (1) educating on current system performance and outcomes; (2) amplifying youth voice; and (3) inspiring action. Topics addressed during the Convening included youth delinquency rates, research supporting effective and scalable evidence-based practices, and firsthand accounts of the success and challenges of grassroots programming. The target audience for the Convening was composed of state agency leaders, lawmakers, nonprofit advocacy groups, researchers, judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, leaders of foundations and philanthropic organizations, and direct service providers.

This Post-Convening Report provides an overview of the topics discussed during the Convening, a synthesis of themes that emerged from throughout the day, and a summary of potential action steps. This Report is organized by panel topic and includes a detailed appendix with each presenter's biography.

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### Welcoming Remarks, Melissa Carter, Executive Director, Barton Child Law and Policy Center

Melissa Carter welcomed the audience to the first Youth Justice Convening and described the aim of the Youth Justice Convening as "bold and crucial." Director Carter stated that the goal of the Barton Center in hosting the Youth Justice Convening is to create space for stakeholders to engage with and learn from each other and to use the knowledge gained from collaboration to "move mindsets" ultimately creating a new narrative on youth justice that is informed by lived experiences that tell us about how our system impacts the people it is serving and validated by research.

Director Carter urged the audience to pay close attention to the youth voices present throughout the Convening. Youth voices were incorporated throughout the Convening in the

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form of youth participating on panels, documentary interviews interspersed between formal presentations that highlighted youths' experiences with the justice system, and youth letter and art projects created in collaboration with the Department of Juvenile Justice.

Director Carter closed her remarks with a call to action, noting that the ultimate catalysts for change are every audience member who individually and collectively have the power to advance systemic change by reframing the narrative around youth justice in the state of Georgia.

### **Opening Remarks, Shawanda Reynolds-Cobb, Commissioner, Department of Juvenile Justice**

The Commissioner of the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) Shawanda Reynolds-Cobb graciously thanked those involved in the planning of the Convening and noted that the Convening presented an opportunity to grow partnerships between DJJ and others. The Commissioner emphasized the importance of community partnerships with DJJ to achieve positive outcomes for system impacted youth. Commissioner Reynolds closed by stating that DJJ looks forward to sharing some of its data through presentations crafted by DJJ professionals and learning and connecting with others in the room.

### **Panel: Juvenile Justice Data Landscape National and Georgia**

**National Trends in Juvenile Offending**, Dr. Christy Doyle, Senior Research Associate at the Georgia Health Policy Center of Georgia State University

Dr. Christy Doyle began the discussion with an overview of the current national trends in juvenile offending. Since a peak of over 8,000 youth arrests in 1996, the youth arrest rate has consistently been on a downtrend and has reached a low of less than 2,000 arrests per year in 2020. To break down the decline, Dr. Doyle utilized data from a recent Council on Criminal Justice Report that showed from 2016-2022:

- Total incidents of juvenile offending decreased by 14%
- Total number of involved juveniles decreased by 18%
- Offending by 15-17 year-olds decreased by 23%
- Offenses committed by male youth decreased by 21% (no change noted for female youth)
- Offenses involving multiple (2 or more) youth decreased by 26%
- Offenses committed by individual youth decreased by 10%
- Decreases were seen in burglary (-62%), larceny (46%), and robbery (45%)

The number of youth held in secure facilities have decreased rapidly since 2020. Despite this overall decline, particular crimes committed by juveniles have seen an uptick since 2016:

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- Juvenile homicides increased by 65%
  - Aggravated assaults increased by 9%
  - Juvenile Offenses involving firearms increased by 21%
  - Incidents involving the use of other weapons increased by 6%
  - Offending rates of younger juveniles (aged 10-14) Increased by 9%

Dr. Doyle continued by acknowledging the persistence of racial inequities among juvenile offenders such as:

- Black youth being arrested at 2.3 times the rate of white youth
- White youth are 31% more likely to have cases diverted than Black youth
- Black youth referred to juvenile court are 60% more likely to be detained than white youth
- Black youth referred to juvenile court are 63% more likely to be committed than white youth
- Black youth are 4.7x more likely to be detained than white youth

Additionally, the rate of detention for Black youth remains higher than that of every other ethnic group.

As for gender differences, there continues to be a higher rate of boys arrested (2.3x) as opposed to girls. Girls are also more likely to be informally managed and less likely to be adjudicated than boys.

Dr. Doyle concluded her presentation with an overview of the behavioral health needs of detained youth. Dr. Doyle shared that today, youth involved in juvenile justice are “far more likely to have significant mental health issues and they have multiple” when coming into the system. Therefore, while detention rates and population numbers have gone down, the treatment needs of detained youth have gone up. Nationally, some of the most frequently seen diagnoses include:

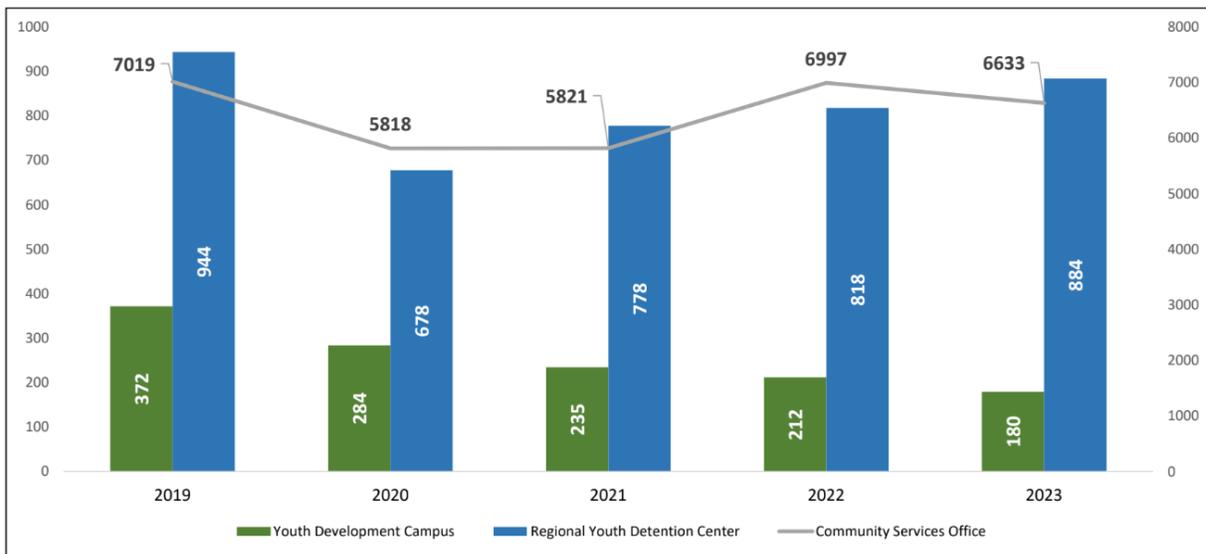
- Substance Use Disorders
- Anxiety Disorders
- PTSD
- Mood Disorders
- ADHD

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**Georgia Youth Recidivism Data**, Allyson Richardson, Deputy Commissioner of Administrative Services, DJJ

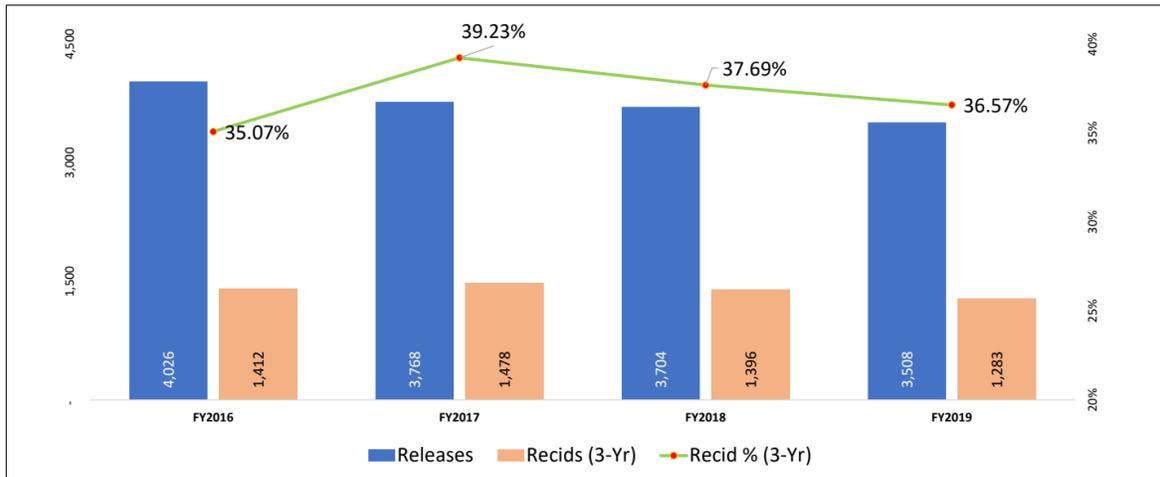
The Deputy Commissioner of Administrative Services at DJJ provided an overview of the Youth Population at DJJ. The graph below details the number of youth in Youth Development Campuses (long-term placement for youth post-adjudication, designated felony, superior court awaiting transfer), Regional Youth Detention Centers (short-term placement for youth pre-adjudication, awaiting placement, superior court awaiting trial), and those under the supervision of Community Services Offices (on probation).

### Youth Population 2019 to 2023



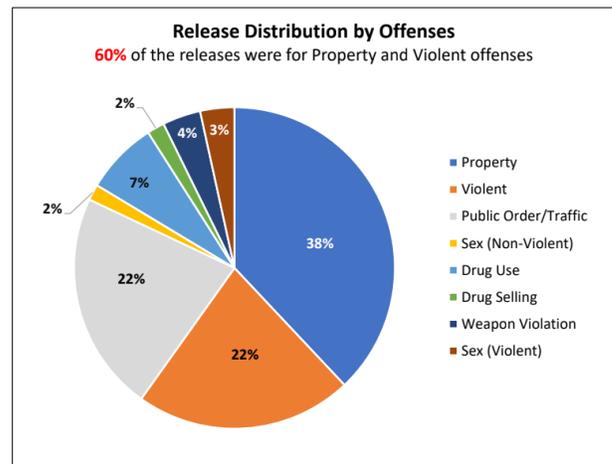
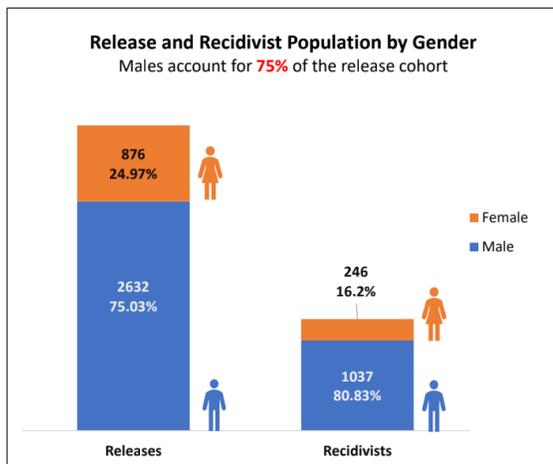
In addition, Ms. Richardson discussed the likelihood of recidivism among released youth, defined as a new charge that results in a juvenile court delinquency adjudication or adult criminal conviction within three years of a juvenile’s initial post-adjudication community placement. The DJJ tracks youth who have been out of the system for three years; therefore, the 2023 recidivism report covers the data from the 2019 release class. Notably, recidivism rates have been on a steady decline since 2017.

**2023 Juvenile Recidivism Report**  
Three-Year Recidivism Rate



Overview of Releases and Recidivations FY2016-FY2019

**2023 Juvenile Recidivism Report**  
Recidivism & Release by Gender and Offenses



2019 Release Class Recidivism data by gender (left) and offenses that caused recidivism by classification (right)

**DJJ Classification Process of Youth**, Windy Hix, Director of the Office of Classification, DJJ

Ms. Hix presented information on the types of placements of youth and the services offered within secure facilities. Ms. Hix provided background information on the average age of youth and length of stay at DJJ facilities:

- The average age of youth placed in Regional Youth Detention Centers (RYDC) is 15-16 years old while the average age of youth placed in a Youth Development Campus (YDC) is 17+ years of age.
  - RYDCs provide temporary secure care and supervision to youth who have been charged with offenses or who have been adjudicated delinquent and are awaiting

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placement. In addition, youth who have been committed to the custody of DJJ are sometimes placed in an RYDC while awaiting treatment in a community program or a long-term facility. (<https://djj.georgia.gov/rydcs-ydcs>)

- YDCs provide secure care, supervision and treatment services to youth who have been committed to the custody of DJJ for long-term programs. (<https://djj.georgia.gov/rydcs-ydcs>)
- On average youth stay at on RYDC for 3 days, 3 months while the average length of stay at a YDC is 1-3 years.

Ms. Hix also provided a detailed overview of the mental health diagnoses of youth in DJJ facilities. In Fiscal Year 2023 the following diagnoses were the most prevalent among youth in secure facilities:

- Substance, Impulse-Control, and Conduct Disorders 62.50 % (1,050)
- Substance-Related and Addictive Disorders 51.37% (863)
- Neurodevelopment Disorders 48.15% (809)
- Trauma and Stressor Related Disorders 39.88% (670)
- Depressive Disorders 38.15% (641)
- Other Conditions that May Be a Focus of Clinical Attention 37.26% (626)

Some of these services include:

- Mental Health Care
- Substance Abuse Treatment
  - 136 Youth in YDC identified as having significant Substance Abuse issues and referred for services
  - 46 Youth served in Substance Abuse treatment programs
  - 25 Youth completed Substance Abuse treatment programs
- Education
  - 31 youths graduated HS (FY23)
  - 40 youths earned a GED (FY23)
  - 30 youths earned a Technical Certificate of Credit (FY23)

### **DJJ Community Data, Cathy Dravis, Program Coordinator, DJJ**

Ms. Cathy Dravis discussed the DJJ services for youth placed in the community. Ms. Dravis noted that DJJ staff are working with the youth from the point of intake to the time that the child is able to return home. Through the Community Services Grant (GSC), there is a new opportunity to provide Evidence-Based Interventions to the youth within their communities, allowing youth to stay home. In 2023, the DJJ noted a 57% reduction in out-of-home placements

for youth offenders far exceeding the goal of 20% reduction since the implementation of these alternatives to secure placement.

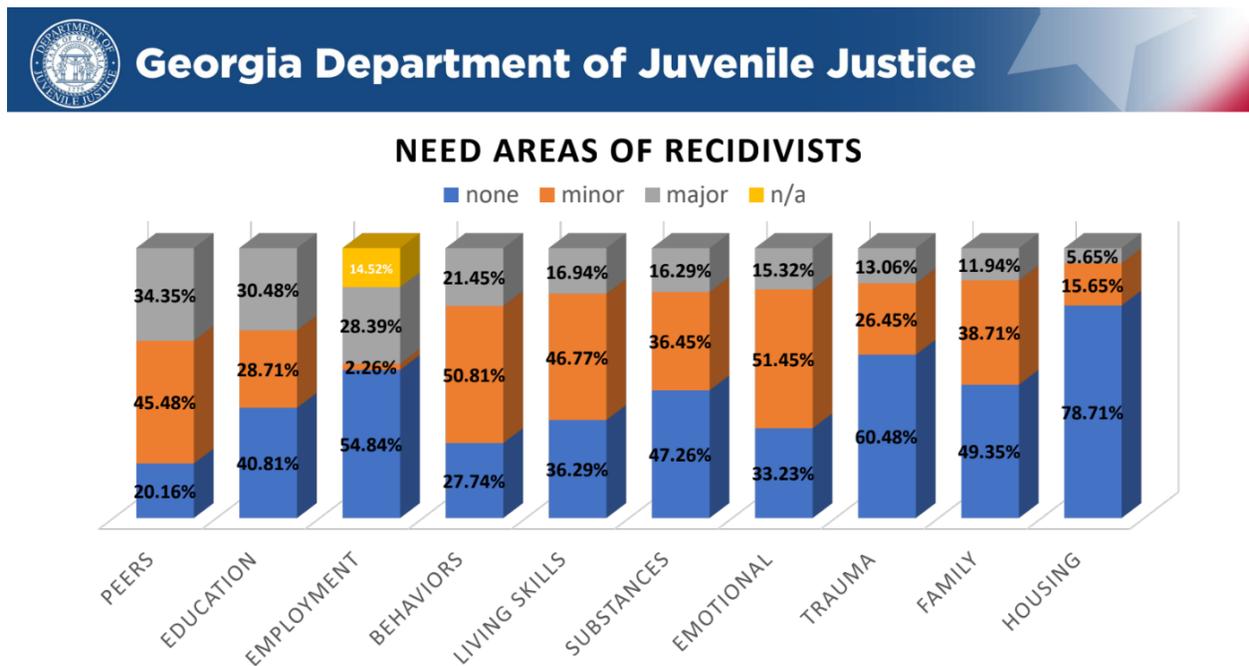
Notably, the data shows that the youth that DJJ serve most frequently are between 14-16 years of age. Ms. Dravis noted that some practical takeaways can be derived from this data. When youth reach DJJ they are already in the system, thus providing targeted prevention programming for youth *below* the 14-16 age range may be an effective tool to reduce youth system involvement.

The CSG primarily utilizes three programs: Thinking for a Change (T4C), Aggression Replacement Therapy (ART), and Functional Family Therapy (FFT). In FY 2023, the programs had high completion rates:

- T4C had an 80% completion rate;
- FFT had an 66% completion rate; and
- ART had an 81% completion rate.

CSG services are intended for youth at medium to high levels of risk for recidivism. The DJJ utilized the Predisposition Risk Assessment Code (PDRA) to assess youth post-adjudication and pre-disposition.

To adequately address the concern of recidivism for youth post-disposition, the DJJ conducts a needs assessment for youth who scored highest in the risk assessment for recidivism. The results of those findings are presented here:



Ms. Dravis noted that there may be a correlation between reducing the highest need areas for recidivist youth and reducing recidivism.

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**Key Data Insights from Voices for Georgia’s Children Landscape Report**, Lesley Kelley & Joe Vignati, Senior Policy Analysts, Voices for Georgia’s Children

Lesley Kelley and Joe Vignati presented key takeaways from the forthcoming Juvenile Justice Landscape Report authored by Voices for Georgia’s Children. Ms. Kelley highlighted that poverty is one of the prominent factors that place youth at risk for justice system involvement.

Additional risk factors correlated with poverty include:

- Stress on families and youth which disrupts family dynamics
- Communities with high poverty rates also tend to have high crime, gang, and drug activity
- Communities with high poverty rates tend to have fewer constructive activities for children
- Barriers to accessing quality mental health care and educational services

Mr. Vignati noted the ethnic and racial disparities present among system involved youth. Consistently, Black youth are overrepresented in the system, while White youth are underrepresented. Notably, White youth tend to receive probation sentences while Black youth may receive harsher outcomes.

**Questions and Answer Summaries:**

*\*This is a summary of the questions asked to panelists and their answers, this is not an exact transcription.*

**Q:** Why is there such a high percentage of “no need” identifiers for the Trauma category of the needs assessment despite the high presence of mental health issues among justice-impacted youth?

**A:** This assessment includes youth who are both inside secure facilities and in community care. Therefore, “none” does not mean “zero need”, but rather that these youth fall in the range of normality for their age and stage of development. It is important to consider that most teenagers across the board have experienced some form of trauma, particularly in recent years. Therefore, what is considered average means those youth who have systems in place in the home or community meaning the DJJ system would not be the best system to impact them.

**Q:** Are there trends in intervention that are particularly impactful for the 10-12-year-old age range considering there is an uptick in this demographic’s justice involvement?

**A:** The most effective intervention for all youth is the prevention of justice system involvement from the start. For youth 12 and under, community-based programming, school-based programming, and family supports tend to be the most effective. Therefore, things like

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extracurriculars, programs that harness family resources and resilience, and investment in community programs are important for prevention for younger children.

**Q:** Are there waiting lists or delays in treatment services for youth with mental illness or Substance Abuse diagnoses?

**A:** Yes, there are delays. There are challenges with retaining staff and ensuring that vacancies are filled. This is particularly true in rural parts of the state as it is difficult to recruit mental health professionals in those areas. There are options for telehealth for youth in facilities to help remedy this issue.

**Q:** Are there numbers that reflect the presence of foster care youth in the justice system?

**A:** Because, historically dependency data has not been gathered at the same capacity as delinquency data, there is a limit to what can be pulled from those data sets. So, if youth had not been involved in delinquency or dependency cases outside of a professional's service area, there would not be a way to know that is their history without family self-disclosing that information. The hope is with new legislation, dependency data will be collected more robustly to consider the crossover data of youth with multiple system impacts.

**Q:** Is there any context that can be afforded when the words "overrepresented" and "more likely to..." are used to describe youth outcomes?

**A:** One panelist noted that the upcoming Landscape Analysis authored by Voices for Georgia's Children, discusses this. Risk factors such as poverty, behavioral health, and inherent or implicit biases within the system may impact decision-point data and population data.

Another panelist highlighted that DJJ is also taking initiatives to build relationships with law enforcement to promote awareness regarding what DJJ can and cannot do. DJJ does not have a "magic wand" to solve each problem and law enforcement needs to be aware of the limitations of DJJ.

Another panelist spotlighted the importance of "handle with care" initiatives which are founded on partnerships between law enforcement officers and school systems. Through these initiatives law enforcement officers may reach out to a designated contact at a school and let them know that a child has had a critical event in their lives and that they made need extra supports and to be "handled with care."

### **Georgia's Grassroots: The Strengths of Grassroots Programming**

This panel was dedicated to exploring effective grassroots programming and the challenges and successes that grassroots services providers experienced. Panelists discussed key strategies to reduce justice involvement among youth which include: mentorship, restorative practices,

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leadership development, and providing access to educational and extracurricular activities. The conversation also highlighted personal success stories from young people who have benefited from the support and guidance of grassroots mentoring programs.

### Key Takeaways:

- **Family Structure & Support:**  
The breakdown of family units and the pressure on parents to provide financially can lead to neglect or limited involvement in their children's lives, which increases vulnerability to bad decisions.
- **Curiosity & Peer Pressure:**  
Youth are naturally curious, have a desire to find ways to make money for themselves, and often make risky decisions. Compounding these factors, youth are also highly influenced by peer pressure and having a desire to “fit in.”
- **Poverty & Lack of Opportunities:**  
Poverty, limited access to education, and a lack of extracurricular activities or mentorship programs create a cycle of disenfranchisement that increases the likelihood of youth engaging in criminal behavior.
- **Mental Health Challenges:**  
Many young people face mental health struggles, such as depression, which for many was exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic or other situational factors. Without proper support, these struggles can lead to poor decision-making.

### Solutions and Approaches:

- **Mentorship & Leadership Development:**
  - Creating relevant and relatable youth mentorship networks that pair youth with mentors who have lived experience, providing guidance on making better decisions and navigating life's complexities.
- **Restorative Practices & Holistic Support:**
  - A holistic approach is critical, involving the child, their family, and community organizations working together. Restorative practices help address wrongdoings while fostering personal growth and accountability.
- **Community Partnerships & Access to Resources:**
  - Collaboration with schools, local organizations, and community centers ensures youth have access to education, activities, and emotional support that steer them away from incarceration. This includes access to practical programs that teach employment skills to youth such as trade programs.

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- **Family Engagement:**
    - Programs that involve parents in the process – whether through education, mentorship, or family therapy – help keep families engaged and aware of the challenges their children are facing, making it easier to redirect them when needed.

### Successes and Challenges:

- Wins:
  - *Life Transformations:* Seeing young people graduate, turn their lives around, and reintegrate into society successfully is a major win.
  - *Academic Success:* Some youth have earned diplomas or degrees even while incarcerated, demonstrating the power of perseverance and the right resources.
  - *Community Impact:* Some youth have become community activists, helping others break free from negative cycles.
- Challenges:
  - *Funding and Resources:* Many organizations struggle with securing the funding needed to expand their services and hire full-time staff.
  - *Barriers in the Juvenile Justice System:* Red tape and the stigma of being "justice-involved" often prevent youth from accessing needed services.
  - *Lack of Access to Opportunities:* Youth without transportation or access to after-school programs often fall through the cracks.

### What the Community Can Do:

- **Authentic Partnership:**
    - Organizations and individuals with access to policy or funding should focus on genuine, hands-on partnerships with youth-serving organizations. Rather than just providing funding, they should also be present in the field and actively engage with young people.
  - **Funding:**
    - Grassroots services providers need increased funding to maintain operations, hire and retain high quality staff, and provide much needed resources to youth. Grassroots providers rarely have the time or resources to dedicate to extensive grant writing projects and need increased access to funding.
  - **Access to Facilities:**
    - Grassroots programmers depend upon government agencies and schools to provide access to their facilities. Without crucial partnerships between these entities and grassroots programmers, youth cannot be effectively served.
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- **Training and Mentorship:**
    - Offering training programs for mentors and youth workers is essential to ensure they can provide effective support. Youth may have unique needs and staff require training to properly assist these youth.
  - **Networking & Resource Sharing:**
    - Creating networks that connect youth to resources, such as job opportunities or mental health services, is vital. Those in policy-making positions can help open doors by ensuring resources are accessible to youth in need.
  - **Reframing the Narrative:**
    - Shifting the narrative around justice-involved youth and understanding that they are not "monsters" but individuals with potential is critical to reducing stigma and fostering support.

### **Youth Voices**

Two former system impacted youth who are mentees of Omar Howard, Freedom Is A Choice, Inc., generously shared their perspectives on risk factors that youth face. Both young men shared their experiences of transformation, highlighting the powerful impact of mentors like Mr. Omar, who helped them see the potential for change in their lives. They emphasized that sometimes they feel that people think that youth are "hard-headed," however, they did have mentors in their lives who they sought out who provided them with advice. Youth do things for a reason and it's important to understand their reasons. They emphasized that they would like for people to know that just because they did something wrong in the past, that this doesn't make them "monsters." Both speakers noted that they were kind-hearted people and that they wished that people would see that side of them rather than just peoples' worst assumptions of them.

Audience members asked the youth what recommendations they would provide to practitioners to help build trust with the youth that they serve. One speaker noted that they would recommend just listening to the youth and demonstrating that they will not give up on them. Another audience member asked about barriers to education. One speaker responded that he wished that schools taught practical skills like how to manage money, hands-on engineering skills, or how to build a real business. A juvenile court judge in attendance asked about questions judges should ask of youth appearing before the court. One speaker noted that providing youth with an opportunity to be heard is crucial. Another youth emphasized how important it was to have youth speak on their own behalf rather than always having someone else speaking for them. One youth said that they wished a judge had asked him "if I were to give you another opportunity, what would you do to help yourself better when you get out?" This question enables a judge to see where a youth is mentally.

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## Promising Practices: The Research to Practice Continuum of Evidence Based Programming

The “Promising Practices” panel came about through a discussion regarding the accessibility and scalability of effective and research backed intervention programming. Across different agencies, there may be different understandings of what “Evidence Based Programming” (EBP) means for different agencies and populations. Though many agencies want something “evidence-based” for their populations, achieving model fidelity and sustainability may prove challenging due to expense, staff capacity and training, difficulty adapting research to real-world contexts, and lack of ongoing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure proper and consistent implementation. This panel aims to help agencies understand the breadth of opportunities for EBP and what types of partnerships and other assets agencies may already have in place to strengthen their capacity for EBP implementation.

**The Juvenile Justice Challenge**, Dr. Gabrielle Chapman, Research Assistant Professor, Department of Human and Organizational Development, Peabody College at Vanderbilt University

Dr. Chapman began her presentation with a powerful empirical observation: most adult offenders were once youthful offenders, and most youth offenders are successfully rehabilitated. Thus, “the Juvenile Justice Challenge” is to ensure that youth offenders are served as quickly and effectively as possible while creating the least amount of harm possible. Therefore, the juvenile justice system needs to be able to:

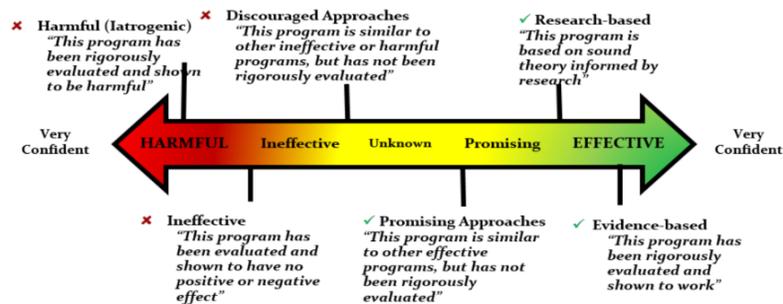
- Distinguish youth at high risk for continued criminal behavior from those at low risk;
- Administer supervision and treatment programs for the high-risk youth that protect public safety and reduce their risk;
- Adequately match youth to programs and services with regard to risk level; and
- Do no harm to the youth at low risk (including those with high need). Many high need youth end up further enmeshed into the system simply because they can only access services through the system.

Across roughly 50 years of research, it is shown that if high-risk youth do not get the proper treatment they will continue to recidivate. Conversely, if low-risk youth receive too much intensive treatment, they too will have increased rates of recidivism. To address these risks, the entire system needs to consider not only the interventions but who should be receiving certain interventions based on their needs and risk level. Dr. Chapman emphasized that services must be delivered in a consistent and sustained manner. This is accomplished through incorporating a program throughout an entire juvenile justice system.

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# Aligning Service Delivery to Research

Programs can be placed along a **continuum of confidence** based on their evidence or theory



How confident are we that this program or practice is a good use of resources **AND** improves outcomes for children and families?

\*Adapted from Bumbarger & Rhoades, 2012

The prevailing definition of Evidence-Based Practice is a certified "model" program. The program would be the "brand name" of an intervention like:

- Functional Family Therapy
- Big Brothers/Big Sisters mentoring and
- Aggression Replacement Training

The evidence-based part of the term means credible research supporting that specific program certified, for example, by:

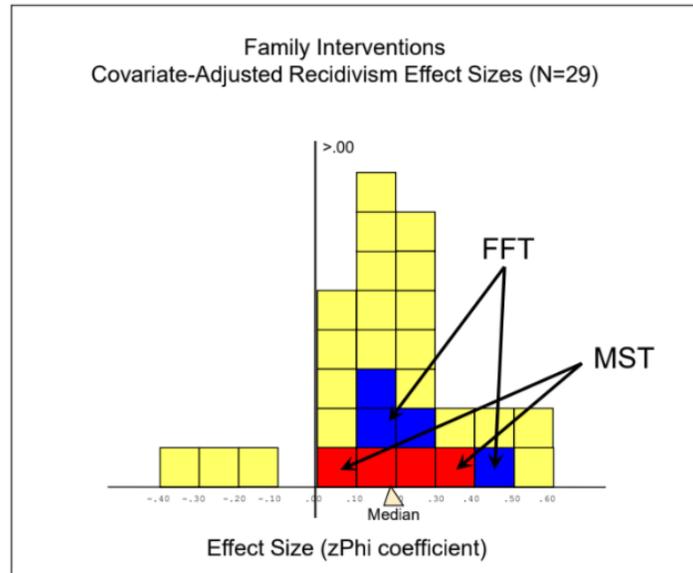
- Blueprints for Violence Prevention
- OJJDP Model Programs Guide
- CrimeSolutions
- National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs & Practices (NREPP)

Despite these programs being impactful, and the presence of many options for finding EBP, these databases often disagree and are incongruent with one another. Meaning that when one program is considered evidence-based by Blueprints for Violence Prevention, it may not be according to CrimeSolutions or vice-versa. Other issues with these "name brand" programs include:

- Cost of training, licensing, and maintenance
- Limited uptake of certified model programs by juvenile justice practitioners
- Limited repertoire of EB model programs relative to the diverse needs of at-risk youth
- Resistance to replacing valued local programs with EBP

One of the biggest findings in Chapman's research is that the impacts on recidivism are similarly distributed among “brand-name” and “homegrown” programs and interventions.

## Recidivism effects for generic and brand name family therapy programs



Each box here represents an “effect” or program. Those on the right side of the line mean there is a dent in recidivism outcomes for youth or youth who are recidivating less than expected with no intervention. The left side of the line represents effects that are harmful to youth. The blue boxes are Functional Family Therapy programs, red boxes are Multisystemic Therapy programs. The yellow boxes are distributed similarly, but some are on the harmful side.

From this study, Chapman and researchers found four major contributions to reducing recidivism within these programming options:

1. *Program type matters*: therapeutic programs actually make a bigger dent on recidivism. Bootcamp programs, on average, have worse outcomes for youth.
2. *Quantity of the intervention*: Adhering to the program with fidelity. Making sure to meet the standards of how many sessions should be administered and for how long
3. *Quality of the intervention*: Small things like having a written protocol can translate to on average impacted recidivism more than programs without written protocol. Training and monitoring for professionals administering programs also matters. Implementing corrective action as needed.
4. *Risk of the youth*: Awareness of the risk level of the youth that you are working with. For example, high risk youth will show often different outcomes than low risk youth.

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These pillars taken together can be implemented in even homegrown programs to ensure fidelity to research backed principles.

### **Adapting What Works to Fit Your Context: A Tale of Two Examples - Behavioral and Academic**

Dr. Kristine Jolivette, Paul W. Bryant and Mary Harmon Bryant Endowed Professor, University of Alabama

Dr. Sara Sanders, Assistant Research Professor, University of Alabama

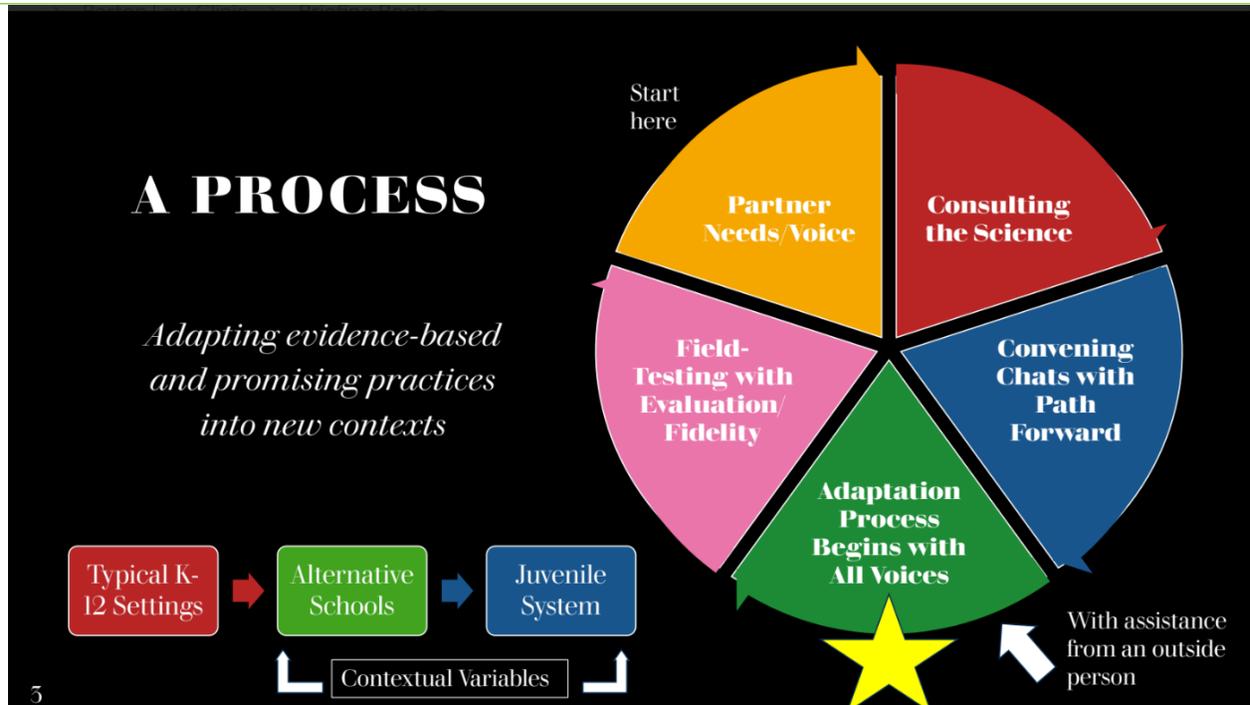
Dr. Jolivette and Dr. Sanders presented how to adapt what works best within individual agency contexts. An important part of using evidence-based programs is adapting them to work for an agency's specific population and fit their needs.

When changes are made to programing models those changes should be based on facts and science. Reputable places to find research include:

- Crime Solutions
- OJJDP Model Programs
- Colorado Blueprints
- California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child-Welfare
- Annie E. Casey Foundation
- National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments
- What Works Clearinghouse
- National Center on School Safety

Dr. Jolivette recommended to never take a tool out of your toolbox until you have a tool to replace it with. Otherwise, chaos can happen at the facility level.

How do you go about adapting a program? A overview of the process looks like this:



**Partner Needs/Voice:** You should start with the needs of the partner or facility that is implementing the program. An Evidence-Based practice or program only provides a framework. This means that it will be a skeleton of how to achieve certain outcomes, but how to get there is dependent upon the agencies. Partner needs and partner voices help adapt that modality by taking stock of what best fits contextually for the agency, its staff, and its service population.

**Consulting with Science:** Using the studies about what works to inform decisions about programming.

**Convening Chats with Path Forward:** This is the plan development phase to answer: What are the current practices? What other tools does the agency already use? How will this new practice enhance or challenge what is preestablished?

**Adaptation Process Begins with All Voices:** (with external assistance): Allowing all tiers of the agency to have a say in the decision-making process. This may include the youth who will be impacted by the change, interdisciplinary teams, and staff within the agencies who are the implementers of the programs.

**Youth Participatory Action Research,** Dr. Briana Woods-Jeager, Associate Professor, Vice Chair for Equity & Engagement, Associate Director of IPRCE, Emory University

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Dr. Woods-Yaeger discussed Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR). YPAR is an approach to research where youth and adults partner to identify and address social problems. This process includes:

- Developing Youth Critical Consciousness
- Creation of Safe Spaces
- Belief in one's Agency and Power
- Engagement and Social Action
- Adaptation to Varying Situational Demands

All while promoting healing and improved mental health for youth.

Some of the challenges with this partnership model include:

- Potential harm as a result of addressing difficult issues (i.e. more stress, exposure to microaggressions, stress, relationship strain, or even tokenizing)
- Sustainability in long-term commitment to a true partnership

Dr. Woods-Jaeger highlighted some of the guiding principles used at the THRIVE Research Lab in their practices that should be applied across all practices:

- Co-Learning and Capacity Building
  - Consider how the partnership can bring about learning on both ends by learning from and with each other. This requires partners to be open to learning from the other side of the equation. The capacity-building piece is important to ensure the work continues even after the partnership ends.
- Mutual Ownership of the Research Process and Product
  - Developing research questions alongside youth, considering areas of research focus, discussing who will own the data, and how will that data be shared across partnerships.
- Transparency and Shared Decision Making
  - Dr. Woods Yaeger emphasized the importance of this principle. This requires a level of humility and openness on the part of those in power. Consider how we are sharing with the youth in this process which will lead to
- Balance in Research and Action

THRIVE follows a process that includes community member input which allows the community agency to identify the true needs for research. THRIVE is intentional in creating an inclusive approach to their research through the use of the Community Action Board. A non-exhaustive list of board members includes youth and parents with lived experience, organization leaders, and healthcare providers.

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## Question & Answer Summaries

**Q:** Can Dr. Chapman say more about the “homegrown” evidence-based programs that are effective among youth so that others know what to look for in their own communities?

**A:** When considering what is evidence-based, one should take time to consider what the youth are receiving. The names of programs may lead one to believe they are receiving different services that are being provided. Additionally, consider the previously mentioned databases on evidence-based models. However, practices should not be discounted simply because there is not a wide range of evidence on the model. If there is no evidence that the program or practice is harming youth and evidence that these are good practices, there is still room for consideration. In these instances, feel empowered to adopt and adapt these practices through a logic model, evaluation, quality control, and assessing risk levels. You can create your own data to do your own review.

### **Hey! Let’s Talk About Empowering Youth, KaCey Venning, Director, HEY! Helping Empower Youth**

Ms. Venning is the Founder of “HEY!” Helping Empower Youth and spoke to the audience about her work with youth dubbed “the water boys” by local media who were selling water in streets in 2020. These youth were being detained and written citations for selling water on the side of the street. Ms. Venning noted that 2020 was not the beginning of the “water boys.” The concept of waterboys is rooted in decades of young men selling various items – water, juice boxes, candy, etc. – on street corners to supplement their income. However, the difference between what we saw 25 years ago and what emerged in 2020 lies in the aftermath of a summer of civil unrest and the COVID-19 pandemic. Ms. Venning noted that she often says that “water is life,” and emphasizes this because the very thing we all need to survive – water – became the very thing for which young Black men were criminalized. It’s difficult to understand how someone can be branded a criminal and a societal threat for selling something essential to life itself.

Ms. Venning’s presentation outlines three main issues:

- 1) The pandemic;
- 2) The city’s response; and
- 3) The effects of poverty.

Ms. Venning approached the water boys from a place of understanding, explaining that the boys couldn’t be moved from street corners until we understood why they were there. Ms. Venning noted that she couldn’t remove the youth from a source of income without replacing that source of income.

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During Covid many of the youth who sold water on the side of the streets didn't have the luxury of quarantining at home. To understand why the youth were selling water on the street corners Ms. Venning approached the youth, bought out their water inventory for the day, and invited them to her house for lunch. Through conversations with the youth, Ms. Venning learned that many of the youth couldn't return home unless they brought money back with them. From this, "HEY! Hydrate" was created. "HEY! Hydrate" is a water brand that is run and powered by youth. This provides youth with a way to do the very thing that they were doing on the street through a legitimate business.

Ms. Venning explained that what she has found that works best is giving youth a judgment free zone to talk. Simply listening is crucial to understanding youth and their needs. Ms. Venning noted that HEY! is unique in that it is not a traditional youth service program. The program doesn't end promptly at 6PM and the program uses cash apps to incentivize youth for the progress they make through the program. Ms. Venning and the staff at HEY! take great efforts to learn about the lives of their youth, their families, and their school development. Ms. Venning noted that when youth are asked what they like about HEY! –it's that HEY! is always there for them.

### **Endnote Address, OJJDP Administrator Liz Ryan**

The Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) is the only government office dedicated to serving youth who are at risk of, or involved in, the juvenile justice system. The focus of OJJDP is on treating children as children, treating children at home, and opening up opportunities for children who are involved in the justice system. OJJDP engages in "listening sessions" to learn from young people what their needs are. OJJDP also has a youth fellowship program and has organized young people into paid advisors for how to host a national OJJDP convening.

Administrator Ryan noted that we as a country have a choice to do things that better the lives of young people or things that make it more difficult for youth to emerge from the system. OJJDP embraces a continuum of care framework to focus on keeping youth out of the justice system and putting interventions or "off ramps" in place for youth who are system involved. Administrator Ryan noted as part of this framework OJJDP has developed grants for developing asset mapping and that Fulton County is among its grantees.



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## Speaker Biographies

### Welcome

#### Melissa Carter

Melissa Carter is a Clinical Professor of Law at Emory Law School and the Executive Director of the Barton Child Law and Policy Center, a multidisciplinary child law program seeking to promote and protect the legal rights and interests of children involved with the juvenile court, child welfare, and youth justice systems. In that role, she is responsible for the administration of the Center's four clinics and other programming, directing the public policy and legislative advocacy clinics, and teaching child welfare, family law, and legislative courses. Melissa brings more than 20 years of experience leading system change work through policy development, public education, and legislative advocacy, including efforts that resulted in a comprehensive revision of Georgia's Juvenile Code and dozens of state child welfare laws. She consults with state child welfare executives, attorneys, and advocates across the U.S. and is a frequent presenter at local and state trainings and national conferences. She has published multiple book chapters and articles on child and family law and policy advocacy topics. Melissa also holds an appointment as a Clinical Professor in the Department of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at Morehouse School of Medicine.

Before joining the Emory Law faculty in 2010, Melissa held an appointment as Georgia's child welfare ombudsman, serving as the Director of the Georgia Office of the Child Advocate after three years as Deputy Director. She has also held positions with the Supreme Court of Georgia and practiced law with Claiborne, Outman, and Surmay, P.C. representing clients in contested and uncontested adoption, fertility law, dependency, and delinquency matters. Melissa earned her bachelor's degree *summa cum laude* and Juris Doctor from the University of Illinois.

### Opening Remarks

#### DJJ Commissioner Shawanda Reynolds-Cobb

Shawanda Reynolds-Cobb was appointed Commissioner of the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) on May 3, 2023, by Governor Brian P. Kemp. She is responsible for the daily operation of more than 3,400 funded employee positions that hold justice-involved youth accountable for their actions through probation supervision and secure detention. Prior to her appointment, Commissioner Reynolds-Cobb served as Assistant Commissioner and Chief of Staff, overseeing the operational aspects of DJJ, including the Division of Administrative Services, Division of Community Services, Division of Secure Facilities, Division of Treatment and Care, and Office of Professional Development and Standards.

Commissioner Reynolds-Cobb has 30 years of experience in government service, beginning her career with the State of Georgia at the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC) in 1993. While at CJCC, Mrs. Reynolds-Cobb managed the daily operations of the Georgia Crime Victims Compensation Program, including the DUI Sign Program, Restitution Program, and the

Training and Outreach Program. She also oversaw the Division budget and was the Legislative Liaison for CJCC.

In 2011, she joined the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice as Deputy Commissioner of Administrative Services, where she oversaw Contracts, Technology and Information Services, Engineering and Maintenance, Property/Records/Fleet, Grants/Real Estate/Strategic Planning, and Project Management. In the role of Deputy Commissioner, Mrs. Reynolds-Cobb worked closely with external agency partners on special projects to assist with furthering the mission of the Department.

In March 2022, Mrs. Reynolds-Cobb was named Assistant Commissioner/Chief of Staff to the DJJ Commissioner. In this role, she oversaw the Department's leadership team and worked closely with staff on long-term agency strategies and initiatives.

Mrs. Reynolds-Cobb earned her Bachelor's degree in Psychology with a minor in Criminal Justice from Georgia State University in 1994 and her Master's degree in Administration from Central Michigan University in 1999.

## **Juvenile Justice Data Landscape National and Georgia**

### Dr. Christy Doyle

Dr. Christy Doyle is a senior research associate at Georgia Health Policy Center. She is a licensed clinical social worker, and brings expertise in planning, implementing, and evaluating mental health and substance use treatment and prevention programs. She has worked extensively in programmatic areas regarding high-risk children and adolescents, identification and treatment of complex trauma, diversion strategies and programs for justice-involved youth, utilization of multi-tiered systems of support in residential treatment settings, and utilization of risk-need-responsivity principles in the use of effect treatment of justice-involved youth. She also brings experience in policy development and review, systems mapping, and systems of care.

### Deputy Commissioner Allyson Richardson

Ms. Allyson Richardson has been a DJJ employee for ten years. She previously worked in the Division of Secure Facilities and most recently served as the Assistant Deputy Commissioner of Administrative Services. Richardson began her career with the State of Georgia at the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council (CJCC). After holding numerous positions, she concluded her time at CJCC as Director of the Criminal Justice Planning and Grants unit. Allyson previously served as an Executive Assistant for the City of Atlanta Fulton County Recreation Authority and a Grant Specialist for the Atlanta Renewal Community Authority. Deputy Commissioner Richardson earned her bachelor's in business administration from Huston-Tillotson University in Austin, Texas, and her master's in Public Administration from Clark Atlanta University.

### Windy Hix

Ms. Windy Hix is the Director of the Office of Classification and Transportation Services (OCATS) with the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ). This unit provides statewide services to include, screening and classification of committed youth as well as completing statewide secure movement for youth in secure detention. Windy Hix has been employed with

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DJJ since 2000 where she has held positions as a Juvenile Probation/Parole Specialist (JPPS II), Assessment and Classification Specialist (ACS), Operations Analyst and Program Coordinator. Ms. Hix has previously worked for the Georgia Department of Family and Children Services as well as Project Adventure. She is a graduate of the University of Georgia with a degree in Social Work.

#### Cathy Dravis

Ms. Cathy Dravis is a program coordinator with the Community Services Division at the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice. She graduated from Kennesaw State University and has been employed at the Department for 26 years. During her time with DJJ, she has spent more than 12 years in direct service to the youth and families in several counties in Georgia. She now focuses on training staff, developing and maintaining tools that are used to help youth, collaborating with courts, judges, and other juvenile justice partners, and works to ensure that juvenile justice is valuable to all in Georgia. Cathy serves as a member of the Juvenile Data Exchange committee, works as a partner with the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, and serves as the agency liaison with national partners for assessment tool development and maintenance. Cathy lives in Atlanta and enjoys traveling, reading a good book, and relaxing near the water.

#### Lesley Kelley

Ms. Lesley Kelley, MPP: Prior to joining Voices, Lesley spent 14 years in family law and subsequently served as the Court Policy Research Analyst for Fulton County Juvenile Court. Lesley joined Voices as a Senior Policy Analyst at Voices in 2022, where she focuses on juvenile justice and child welfare policy.

#### Joe Vignati

Mr. Joe Vignati: For the past 36 years, Mr. Vignati has been intimately involved in all aspects of Georgia's juvenile justice system, tirelessly serving at-risk youth in a wide variety of roles, both in his career with state government and as a volunteer in community settings. During his tenure with the Governor's Office, he secured \$67 million in federal criminal justice funds for the State of Georgia. He was appointed Assistant Commissioner/ Chief of Staff for the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice in 2017 and retired from state service after thirty-two years in 2019. From 2019-2021, Mr. Vignati served as Chair of the Federal Advisory Committee on Juvenile Justice (FACJJ) of the U.S. Department of Justice, which advised the President and the U.S. Congress on juvenile justice matters. Governor Brian Kemp appointed Mr. Vignati as Chair of the State Advisory Group on Juvenile Justice in December 2023. He was recently reappointed to serve a four-year term on the Board of the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council. He holds a bachelor's degree in political science from Augusta University in Augusta, GA, and graduated summa cum laude in 1992 with a master's degree in public administration from Georgia State University in Atlanta, GA. He and his wife Kathryn live in Tucker and have 4 adult children and 5 cats.

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## **Georgia's Grassroots: The Strengths of Grassroot Programming**

### Felix Rodriguez

Felix Rodriguez serves as the Training & Programs Manager at the Center for Civic Innovation. In tandem with our executive director, Felix is charged with designing and implementing CCI's flagship Civic Innovation Fellowship program. He also maintains and build relationships with our partners and past Fellows to support CCI's effort to continuously give back to its community of leaders.

Immediately prior to CCI, Felix served on the Stacey Abrams for Governor campaign in 2022. He previously held roles at both the Community Foundation for Greater Atlanta, and the California Community Foundation. Felix studied and received his Masters of Public Policy from the Price School at the University of Southern California, his undergraduate studies were at the University of Houston.

Felix firmly believes there are good people in the City of Atlanta that are capable of progressing the city forward in a equitable manner if just supported and provided the right set of tools to do so. At CCI, Felix works diligently to support the new guard of Atlanta by connecting CCI-community members to opportunities for capital, technical support, and connections to policymakers, to ensure they have the opportunity to make Atlanta the city on a hill it is capable of being for all.

In his spare time, you can find Felix enjoying quality time with his wife and dog, working to make their home a little homestead in the city, and always, watching or listening to a soccer game.

### Dr. Omar Howard

Mr. Omar Howard of Stone Mountain, GA, the founder of Freedom is a Choice Inc., is a successful individual with an incarcerated history. He uses his previous incarceration as a tool for counseling and mentoring at-risk youth and troubled adults, helping them make decisions that will impact the rest of their lives.

While in prison, Omar realized he had to make a drastic change in his life. He then made the decision to join the Christian faith and change the direction of his life. While serving an 18-year sentence for multiple crimes, he joined the prison ministry choir, self-help groups, and obtained his GED as well as several trades.

Because of his positive institutional conduct, he was asked to join the mentoring program, where he mentored juveniles who were incarcerated in Lee Arrendale State Prison, also known as "Alto." He also did motivational speaking for the "Scared Straight" program, where he spoke to students from various high schools.

Several years later, while at the Atlanta Transitional Center (ATC), he was asked to speak at the Clayton County Performing Arts Center, as well as Clayton County high schools and middle

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schools, about making better decisions. Before leaving prison, Omar and a group of residents from the ATC traveled around the state of Georgia to various churches and school functions to promote Georgia Department of Corrections programs.

His successful transition from prison and the readjustment to society serves as a viable positive example for at-risk and troubled youth to choose freedom over incarceration.

### Tekesia Shields

Tekesia Shields is a mother of four wonderful sons and an awesome grandmother. Ms. Shields worked over 12 years as a case manager, educating mothers on the importance of prenatal and infant mortality prevention. Over the years, Ms. Shields has encouraged not only her own sons, but several families whom lives she's touched on a daily basis.

Tekesia Shields decided to start an organization called Mothers Against Gang Violence (MAG Violence), due to her trails of raising her own sons. Ms. Shields received services and education that she felt a need to share with the community which may save lives of many youth of today.

After receiving honors from Atlanta Public Schools and Center for Black Women's Wellness, Tekesia Shields decided to walk in her destiny and plant seeds that will nourish the community.

### Najiva Timothee

Najiva Timothee is the CEO and Founder of The Consult Table, a leadership development coaching and training business. She is a certified leadership coach, trainer and mentor for youth and adults, adding value to business ecosystems and youth-serving organizations. She is the founder and visionary of the Girls Dig Deeper Initiative, a girls group mentoring and youth development program focusing on leadership development and personal growth for youth in schools and communities as well as incarcerated youth.

Najiva graduated from Broward College where she studied Business Management and Leadership. She worked as an Executive Lead for one of the largest retail and pharmacy store chain in the U.S in the states of Florida and Georgia, Walgreens. She worked diligently as a leader for the company for 14 years. As a leader for Walgreens, Najiva had to build and lead teams, manage performance, coach and develop team members, develop actions plans and establish communication foundations. Her leadership skills, performance management skills and business performance management has helped her to cultivate a passion to help people to grow, develop and advance to new levels.

This led her to start her own coaching practice where she can make an impact and add value to people's lives. Najiva started her business The Consult Table to serve and inspire leaders by adding value to their lives, to build a leader's mindset, tap into their potential and inner strengths, and achieve great results in their performance. She helps small business owners and their teams to develop leadership qualities and skills needed to run a successful business. Najiva

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is married and a mother of four who loves to spend time with her family when she is not in her field of work.

### Julius Campbell

Mr. Julius Campbell is a Life Navigator at Deep Center in Savannah, Georgia. As a Life Navigator, Julius Campbell's lived experience is a welcomed piece to this diverse village. Julius is a passionate servant-leader, motivational speaker, and mentor who brings with him a host of relevant and relational skill sets that will aid in our commitment to encourage, educate, and empower our youth. He is a Minister, Founder & Executive Director of OAA Savannah, Treasurer at Reentry United, and a TEDTalk speaker.

### Marisa Arnold

Marisa Arnold is the Director of Youth Programs at the Deep Center in Savannah, Georgia. Savannah native and community leader, Marisa Arnold has exhibited a passion for youth and community leadership from her adolescence to adulthood. Involved in many organizations from Girl Scouts, singing ensembles, dance ministries, theatre productions, and mentoring groups Marisa is an avid servant leader. Marisa received two Bachelor's degrees, one in Educational Studies and the other in Music, Vocal Emphasis from Wesleyan College and earned her Masters of Education from Georgia Southern University in Adult Education and Community Leadership.

Marisa is a wife and mother to three beautiful children and a motherlike figure to young adults she's mentored and guided during her career. Taking tremendous pride in being a youth advocate and community change agent Marisa is dedicated to making an impact in her hometown for the children, youth, and families she works with. Marisa firmly and fiercely believes that "with humility, integrity, and compassion we can lead and foster growth and change. Be kind, be humble, be great!"

### Curtis Trimble

Youth mentee of Omar Howard.

### Ade' Ison, Jr.

Youth mentee of Omar Howard.

## **Promising Practices: The Research to Practice Continuum of Evidence Based Programming**

### Dr. Christy Doyle

Dr. Christy Doyle is a senior research associate at Georgia Health Policy Center. She is a licensed clinical social worker, and brings expertise in planning, implementing, and evaluating mental health and substance use treatment and prevention programs. She has worked extensively in programmatic areas regarding high-risk children and adolescents, identification and treatment of complex trauma, diversion strategies and programs for justice-involved youth, utilization of

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multi-tiered systems of support in residential treatment settings, and utilization of risk-need-responsivity principles in the use of effective treatment of justice-involved youth. She also brings experience in policy development and review, systems mapping, and systems of care.

#### Dr. Gabrielle Chapman

Gabrielle Chapman is a Research Assistant Professor at Vanderbilt University's Peabody Research Institute (PRI). Chapman received her Ph.D. in Sociology at Vanderbilt, specializing in crime and deviance. Chapman's expertise has a broad base that includes experience working with all levels of criminal and juvenile justice entities, legislatures, academia, and private industry. Her research has focused on the intersection of criminological research and justice system policy and practice, program evaluation, and meta-analysis. Her current work with Mark Lipsey, Ph.D. at PRI involves research, project management, and technical assistance for the Standard Program Evaluation Protocol (SPEP) in nine states. The SPEP is designed to be a sustainable, practical program evaluation tool for residential and community-based juvenile justice programs and serves as a driver for juvenile justice reform and reinvestment initiatives.

#### Dr. Kristine Jolivette:

Kristine Jolivette, Ph.D. is the Paul W. and Mary Harman Bryant Endowed Chair for the College of Education at the University of Alabama. She has over 20 years of experience researching preventative social-emotional learning, behavioral, academic, and mental health strategies for use by staff within residential facilities serving children and youth with and at risk for emotional and behavioral disorders and mental health issues. Her research foci are on three-tiered frameworks (i.e., facility-wide positive behavior interventions and supports), evidence-based tiered practices across domains, and tiered practices all adapted for restrictive settings. She has managed more than \$12 million in funds in support of her research.

#### Dr. Sara Sanders

Dr. Sanders is an assistant research professor at the University of Alabama. Her research is primarily with students and youth with and at risk for emotional and behavioral disorders in residential treatment facilities and secure juvenile justice facilities. Dr. Sanders' research foci include the adaptation and implementation of evidence-based academic, behavioral, and social/emotional interventions for youth in alternative education settings, delivered within a three-tiered framework (e.g., facility-wide positive behavior interventions and supports).

#### Dr. Briana Woods-Jaeger

Dr. Briana Woods-Jaeger, PhD is a licensed clinical psychologist and associate professor of behavioral, social, and health education sciences at Emory University. She received her bachelor's degree in psychology from Duke University and her doctorate in child clinical psychology from the University of Washington. Dr. Woods-Jaeger specializes in supporting clients dealing with traumatic stress, grief, and anxiety. She employs a collaborative, supportive approach to assessment and therapy focused on providing her clients with the skills and support they need to reach their goals and live authentically according to their values.

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## HEY! Let's Talk About Empowering Youth

### KaCey Venning

A 25-year Atlantan, Kanasha 'KaCey' Venning by DNA is a youth and education advocate with an emphasis on mental. She is a Christian minister, entrepreneur, and strategist. A daughter of a mother who retired after 38 years in the public school system; and a father who, with only a high school diploma, became a skilled carpenter producing multi-million-dollar projects. Through her parents' teaching examples, KaCey learned that business, education, and faith would curate an ideal life advocating for the advancement of youth and urban intellectualism through ministry.

Youth education and advocacy is KaCey's top priority. In 2009, she co-founded HEY! Helping Empower Youth, a 501c3 nonprofit advocating for underserved youth in Atlanta. KaCey has served youth and educators in Title I schools across Atlanta Public Schools through nonprofit work, providing curriculum and family support for students, and as a liaison for youth and families for 17 years. Her experience with students in and out of school prompted her 2021 Atlanta Board of Education campaign for At-Large Seat 7 to share with the city how and why wrap-around services and a new approach to youth service work is necessary.

In 2016, KaCey became the author of *Built For This: A Young Woman's Journey to Self-Discovery and Empowerment*. She followed up with her 2018 book *Wrestling with Peace*, making KaCey a sought-after speaker and thought leader. Her gift of storytelling helps with hard truth-telling and encourages accountability and empowerment. KaCey thrives from speaking, teaching, and facilitating opportunities for others to realize their purpose and actualize their gifts. She has worked professionally to help foster custom Cause Marketing and Corporate Social Responsibility Plans for Fortune 500 companies, including Coca-Cola, L'Oreal Paris USA, Scholastic, and The Home Depot. She translates her skilled approach used for corporations to individuals by identifying their own Personal Social Responsibility Plan—better known as their purpose.

KaCey is actively creating a legacy— 25 years of work as an author, nonprofit professional and founder, National Service member, and ordained minister here in Atlanta, GA. KaCey is a product of Morris Brown College, Georgia State University, and the Interdenominational Theological Center with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Sociology and is currently in her last semester towards her Master of Divinity degree to focus on Public Spaces. She is a happy dog mom of a beautiful Pitbull named Riley, a trusted member of her Washington Park community, and a public servant.

### **Endnote Address**

### OJJDP Administrator Liz Ryan

Liz Ryan became Administrator of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) on May 16, 2022, following appointment by President Joseph R. Biden. Prior to leading

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OJJDP, Ms. Ryan served as president and CEO of the Youth First Initiative, a national campaign focused on ending the incarceration of youth by investing in community-based alternatives. Ms. Ryan founded the Youth First Initiative in 2014; under her leadership, it achieved the closure of youth prisons in six states and redirected more than \$50 million to community-based alternatives to incarceration.

Ms. Ryan founded the Campaign for Youth Justice in 2005 and served as its president and CEO until 2014. The national, multistate initiative sought to end the prosecution of youth in adult criminal courts and the placement of youth in adult jails and prisons. During Ms. Ryan's tenure, the campaign's work led to legislative and policy changes in more than 30 states, a 60-percent decrease in the number of youth in adult courts, and more than a 50-percent decrease in the number of youth placed in adult jails and prisons.

A staunch advocate for youth, Ms. Ryan cofounded and cochaired Act 4 Juvenile Justice, a campaign to reauthorize the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act. She also served as advocacy director for the Youth Law Center, as national field director for OJJDP's Juvenile Court Centennial Initiative, and as an advocate for the Children's Defense Fund. She has written extensively about juvenile justice reform, including articles, editorials, reports, and chapters of books.