

Exercise: How do we tear down or diminish barriers to fairness for youth of color in the JJ system?

- ▶ **Mission:** *Reduce and prevent juvenile delinquency by effectively intervening, educating and treating youth in order to strengthen families and increase public safety.*
- ▶ **Vision:** *A seamless, equitable, comprehensive juvenile justice system that fully invests in the success of our employees and provides timely, age-appropriate services to youth and their families in need, in the most appropriate settings.*

- 1) “Twenty-one percent of Black and African Americans reported having a mental illness, compared to 23.9% of non-Hispanic Whites. However, just 39% of Black and African Americans received mental health services compared to non-Hispanic Whites (52%).” – Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). 36% of JJ youth assessed have an indicated mental health issue and 99% of committed youth have at least one mental health disorder and an average of four MH disorders.

What can JJ staff do to positively impact youth perception of receiving mental health treatment?

- 2) African American youth are more likely to be diagnosed with externalizing disorders while white youth are diagnosed with internalizing disorders. What does this say about the tools experts use to make behavioral health diagnoses or any potential undue bias that may exist in the examiner? What can JJ staff do to improve diagnoses so that appropriate treatment can better be applied?
 - How might JJ staff plan for implementation of remediation services to ensure fair and accurate results? What should be considered?
- 3) Reducing disproportionality sometimes relies on reducing the occurrence of a reported behavior. **Simple assault** remains the number 1 offense committed by youth in NC. In 2018, 2,585 complaints for simple assault were received. In 2022, 3,909 were received. Over half of simple assaults are school based complaints. Does JJ have an opportunity to impact these occurrences? What kind of programming is needed, where and when to reduce the number of simple assaults by juveniles? How might this programming have open access to account for parent work schedules, transportation demands, and school schedules?
- 4) In CY 2022, eight of the top ten school-based offenses (SBOs) were misdemeanors and one was a status offense (truancy). School Justice Partnerships were created to reduce the number of youth with non-injury altercations or truancy from reaching the juvenile justice system. Over half of NC counties have established an SJP. Though, the presence of an SJP does not delineate whether SBO's will be at the top or bottom of the district's frequent offense list.

Top 10 School-Based Offenses: CY 2022		
Charged Offense		Complaints
(M) misdemeanor	(F) felony (S) status offense	
Simple assault (M)		2,211
Disorderly Conduct at School (M)		1,331
Simple affray (M)		1,173
Possession of weapons other than firearms and explosives on school grounds (M)		681
Truant < 16 (S)		645
Communicating threats (M)		621
Communicating Threat of Mass Violence on Educational Property (F)		392
Simple possession schedule VI controlled substance (M)		315
Assault government official / employee (M)		297
Disorderly Conduct by engaging in fighting or other violent conduct or in conduct creating the threat of imminent fighting or other violence (M)		286

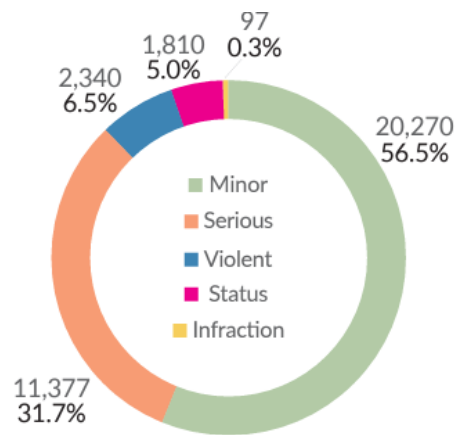
Are there other methods to reduce school-based complaints that you would recommend JJ pursue? What policies, training, or programming might be put into place to reduce misdemeanor complaints or to address this behavior outside of the juvenile justice system?

- 5) The Urban Institute's "Do no harm guide," teaches the importance of relaying data in a human-centered approach, using colors in visuals that do not reflect gradient or hierarchy and using icons of people rather than rectangular bars. Think about letters to parent and victims, the JJ Newsletter, and the YDC handbook. How might JJDP communications to staff, stakeholders, communities, families, and youth be improved to reflect respect and engage audiences of all races and ethnicities?
- 6) JJ often utilizes well-known and established program providers to provide state contracted services through Community Programs (i.e., Methodist, Eckerd and AMIKids). How can JJ create variation to funding programs that would promote greater inclusivity of underrepresented vendors/providers in its award and purchase of contractual services? What manner of outreach and education should be implemented to accomplish this goal? Should e-procurement contracts be limited to 3 years or less with no options for renewal? What are the pros and cons of varying contract lengths? (Currently state-level contracts are awarded for 3 years with 2 optional renewal years).
- 7) How can JJ develop programming that mirrors the children who are overrepresented in our system which are identified as best practice approaches for working with youth of color?
- 8) What opportunities and tools do JJ staff have to help reduce youth of color's involvement in the JJ system? Admission into detention? Commitment to YDC?

- 9) Diversion is identified as an opportunity to reduce JJ system penetration of youth of color. How can Court Services increase the diversion rate and serve more juveniles on diversion plans and contracts to prevent YOC from further penetration into the JJ system. Is availability of diversion programming sufficient in each county?



White juveniles are 1.4 times as likely to have a complaint end in diversion than Black / AA juveniles.



Juvenile Crime and Offenses