WHY YOUTH POLICIES ARE NECESSARY

Rising reports of harmful interactions between youth and law enforcement agencies and the lack of model policies led Strategies for Youth to fill this void with its 12 Model Law Enforcement Policies for Youth Interactions. These policies are the first of their kind to be introduced and provide a valuable roadmap for law enforcement leaders, elected officials, communities and insurance providers.

WHY Does Law Enforcement Need Policies for Interacting with Youth?

- Young people's brain development and behavioral capacities are significantly different from adults. Law enforcement practices should reflect what science has proved, and what the Supreme Court has repeatedly found.

- The U.S. Department of Justice recommends that law enforcement agencies include policies for interactions with youth in its consent decrees, as do standard-setting law enforcement organizations like the International Association of Chiefs of Police.

- Most law enforcement agencies—the 80% of agencies with fewer than 50 officers, as well as some large urban agencies—have no policies to guide agency and officers' responses to, and interactions with, youth.

- According to the Strategies for Youth poll, communities expect law enforcement agencies to have the tools to interact safely with youth —and in fact,

the public erroneously believes agencies are already equipped to do so.

- The lack of policies and accountability increase the risk that youth's civil rights and safety may be infringed during interactions with law enforcement. It also may help to explain the disproportionate arrests of, and use of force against, youth of color, youth living in poverty, LGBTQ+ youth, youth with disabilities, youth in crisis, and other marginalized youth.

- While law enforcement agencies—or municipalities and counties—may use taxpayer dollars to settle lawsuits brought by youth or their families, few respond to incidents of police abuse by adopting policies designed to change policing methods that physically and emotionally harm youth. Communities and families are asking, "Where are the policies? How could there be no policies to prevent this outcome?"

HOW Does SFY Fill The Policy Gap?

SFY fills this policy gap by protecting youth and supporting law enforcement to end the recurring problems in youth policing practices, by:

- Offering a comprehensive set of developmentally appropriate, trauma-informed, equitable policies that can be immediately adopted by police agencies across the country. All policies that SFY proposes are carefully articulated, well-supported by research, and

have been vetted by national, regional, state, and local level stakeholders.

- Providing policy language for agencies to use, either in whole or in part, that has been specifically designed to reflect and respond effectively to the special needs of youth and that reflects our up-to-date understanding of adolescent development.

- Giving agencies the tools and strategies needed to guide how officers should interact with youth before, during, and after interactions— including avoiding unnecessary encounters and de-escalating interactions that do occur—and that establish clear mandates that can be used to hold officers accountable.

HOW Did SFY Develop the Policies?

SFY developed these policies by analyzing:

- Extensive research and scholarship on the short and long-term trauma inflicted on youth who are subjected to abusive police treatment, evidence of ongoing racial and ethnic disparities in young people's interactions with law enforcement, and recommendations for developmentally appropriate tactics that mitigate trauma during youth interactions.

- Court decisions at the federal and state level.

- Recently-enacted statutes to address use of force, data collection, training, accountability, and racial disparities in police contacts.

- Policy language developed from U.S. Department of Justice civil rights investigations and consent decrees as well as federal guidance, including from the U.S. Department of Justice, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and the U.S. Department of Education.

- Policy guidance, reports and recommendations from national law enforcement leaders, including the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), and the Commission on Accreditation of Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA).

- Law enforcement agency policies that have become national models.

- State attorneys general policies and guidance.

- The input of law enforcement leaders, psychologists, prosecutors, juvenile defense attorneys, police misconduct attorneys.

SFY's research is contained in 10 detailed appendices, which list additional source materials and examples of effective approaches in use by agencies across the country.