

If Not Now, When?

A Survey of Juvenile Justice Training

Strategies for Youth (SFY), a national policy and training organization dedicated to improving police/youth interactions, conducted a nationwide survey of the quantity and quality of juvenile justice training provided to cadets during their basic training in police academies. This survey was conducted after the release of an International Association of Chiefs of Police's report noting the absence of in-service training in juvenile justice for police officers.

According to survey results, most state police academies' devote less than 1% of total curriculum time to teaching

about juvenile justice. In fact, five states – Alaska, Kentucky, West Virginia, New Hampshire, and Colorado – require no juvenile justice training in the academy at all.

The training that does exist emphasizes the juvenile code, rather than practical skills and best practices for working with youth that are grounded in developmental psychology. Officers do not receive training on how to recognize and respond appropriately to prevalent mental health issues among teens.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SFY STUDY INDICATE:

- Only 1% of basic training in police academies is spent on juvenile justice issues.
- Only 8 states provide information on the federally required obligation to reduce disproportionate minority contact (DMC) in their juvenile justice curriculum.
- Only 2 states – Connecticut and Illinois – report providing new officers any training on adolescent development and psychology.
- Only 9 states provide new officers any training on adolescent mental health issues.

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Photo by Romana Vysatova