

• May 2019 •

# Strategies for Youth

## Programming Impact Report



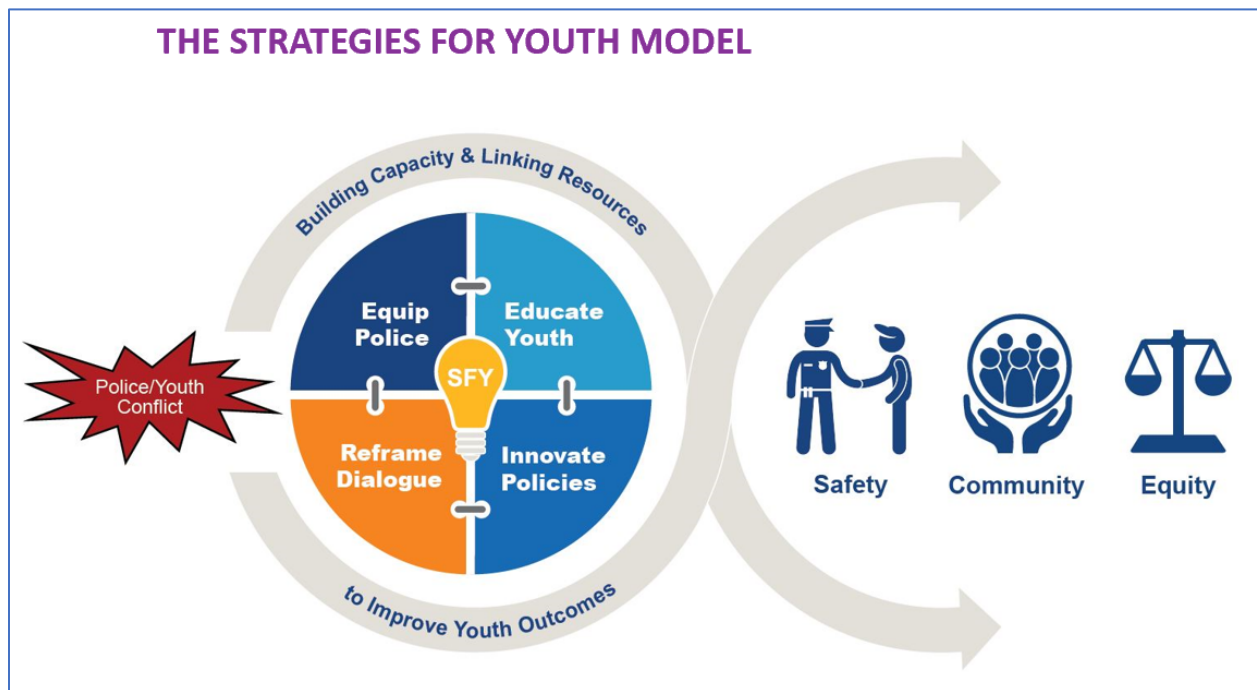
## Impacts of Strategies for Youth Programming

Strategies for Youth (SFY) is a national nonprofit policy and training organization, founded in 2010, dedicated to improving police/youth interactions and reducing disproportionate minority contact through community engagement, police training and outreach to youth. SFY got its start in Massachusetts and continues to work with police departments in the Commonwealth and presently, with departments across the United States.

Based in Massachusetts, SFY has developed programs for police and youth in schools and localities in 19 states to help correct misconceptions and support the development of skills to de-escalate interactions. As a result of SFY law enforcement trainings, jurisdictions and school systems see measurable decreases in arrests of teens for non-violent crimes and an increase in the use of community-based programming and mental health services for youth.

Strategies for Youth programs have been designed to actively engage police, youth, and youth-serving community-based organizations in an interdisciplinary approach to improving and transforming youth/police interactions. Our model, pictured below, aims to address issues holistically, with programming for law enforcement, youth, and parents, customized to address the unique features of each jurisdiction where we work.

Since its creation in 2010 Strategies for Youth has delivered its programs and services to law enforcement agencies, youth and juvenile justice system stakeholders in 19 states, and thousands of law enforcement professionals and youth. During that time, Strategies for Youth programs have consistently resulted in positive change in police/youth interactions. As a result of SFY programming, jurisdictions and school systems see measurable decreases in arrests of teens for non-violent crimes and an increase in use of community-based programming and mental health services for youth.



## SFY Strategies:

Our long-term vision is for police to employ trauma-informed, developmentally-appropriate approaches with youth, whereby arrest is used as a last resort only when public safety is endangered, and police work in concert with community groups to strengthen the overall network of support for vulnerable youth. We pursue this mission using four mutually reinforcing core strategies:

1. Training law enforcement through our two-day *Policing the Teen Brain* trainings, which teach police about adolescent psychology and the effects of trauma and poverty on young people's behaviors and attitudes, and how to defuse, rather than exacerbate, encounters with youth. Each training is preceded, informed, and adjusted by an assessment of departments' current treatment of youth and by an audit of community-based organizations where police can refer young people for services and support instead of arrest. These youth-serving community based organizations are introduced to officers on the second day of training, with time set aside for informal networking to take place. Additionally:
  - a. SFY offers *Policing the Teen Brain in School* for School Resource Officers (SRO) deployed in schools. This training offers information about education law, and equips officers with strategies for performing their role in the school environment without contributing to the school-to-prison pipeline.
  - b. SFY has developed the *In the Presence of Children* training for law enforcement agencies. This training, following SFY's report *First, Do No Harm: Model Practices for Law Enforcement Agencies when Arresting Parents in the Presence of Children*, for the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs, teaches officers how to mitigate the harm of children observing the arrest of a parent/caretaker.
2. Creating law enforcement agency policies and practices that reflect a developmentally appropriate, trauma-informed, and equitable approach to policing youth. For example, SFY, working with the Cleveland Department of Police and the U.S. Department of Justice under Loretta Lynch, developed a comprehensive set of model law enforcement agency policies and practices. SFY now promotes this model policy and urges its adoption with all agencies. Many agencies have no policies; others have outdated ones that ignore key issues affecting youth, such as those related to mental health, LGBTQ youth and commercially sexually exploited children.
3. Teaching youth, aged 11-19, through the *Juvenile Justice Jeopardy* game, how to peacefully navigate interactions with their peers, police, and authority figures, use social-emotional skills to withstand provocations and impulses to flee/escalate, and to understand the legal consequences of their conduct. We focus on reaching youth, particularly youth of color, at high risk of arrest and/or violence in their encounters with police. We have recently developed a version focused on helping young people identify and manage the trauma that can lead to arrest and violence. We are also developing a version specifically aimed at preventing girls from getting arrested or being pushed into the juvenile justice system. Girls' path through the criminal justice system is different from boys, and this version of the game will focus on the behaviors and the laws that may push them unnecessarily into the juvenile justice system.

4. Conducting original research, writing and widely disseminating policy reports designed to heighten public awareness of structural issues in policing in need of reform, and to equip advocates and legislators with evidence-based reforms and improvements. For instance, after a highly publicized, violent interaction involving a school sheriff's deputy and an adolescent female in class in South Carolina, SFY created the *Parents' Checklist for SROs* to alert parents to the legal risks their children face in schools that rely upon SROs to enforce school disciplinary codes.

## Impacts of the Policing the Teen Brain Trainings

Through its *Policing the Teen Brain*<sup>™</sup> training, Strategies for Youth equips police with developmentally appropriate, trauma-informed, and equitable strategies for positive interactions with youth. The result of Strategies for Youth programs are improved public and officer safety, positive and pro-social community engagement, and more equitable approaches to policing youth.

While data collection on youth contacts with law enforcement is often less available and less rigorous than data on adult interactions, Strategies for Youth has been able to measure our impact through three methods:

1. Training evaluations collected during training events
2. Arrest data from agencies
3. Independent peer-reviewed research

SFY typically stays engaged in jurisdictions where we have trained officers by providing ongoing technical assistance. In the aftermath of these trainings, SFY staff often hear about community leaders, such as Mayors and clergy, recognizing police leaders for improving police/youth interactions and about the creation of new partnerships between police and community-based organizations serving youths. We also find many of our materials are reproduced and widely distributed. In some jurisdictions, such as Indiana, Maine, Washington DC and Cleveland, Ohio, we have been invited to return to provide our trainings in state or departmental police training academies.

### 1. Training Evaluations:

Strategies for Youth collects pre- and post-training evaluation surveys of all participants. Responses are collected and analyzed to determine the impact of the curriculum in officers' understanding of adolescent development and psychology, their level of confidence in handling a variety of teenage behaviors, and their willingness to consider using alternatives to arrest. While the results vary to some degree, Strategies for Youth routinely sees significant movement between the pre and post-training survey responses related to officers' knowledge and understanding of adolescent behavior and best practices for interacting with youth in a developmentally appropriate manner.

On the next page are examples of the survey results from 3 different law enforcement agencies.

#1 These are 2018 responses from officers attending the training from the San Francisco Police Department:

Statement	Percent Agree <b>Before</b> Training	Percent Agree <b>After</b> Training	Relative % Increase
I feel equipped to recognize and work with youth who have experienced trauma.	67%	95%	↑ 42%
I feel equipped to recognize and work with youth with mental health issues.	62%	86%	↑ 39%
I feel equipped to help youth regulate their behavior.	70%	90%	↑ 29%
I feel equipped to refer youth to resources in my community for support.	71%	100%	↑ 41%

#2 These are 2018 responses from officers attending an SFY from a medium-sized city, in an agrarian community, with a population of about 100,000 in the Midwest:

Statement	Percent Agree <b>Before</b> Training	Percent Agree <b>After</b> Training	Relative % Increase
I feel equipped to recognize and work with youth with mental health issues.	78%	93%	+17%
I feel equipped to recognize and work with youth who have experienced trauma.	80%	100%	+25%
I feel equipped to help youth regulate their behavior.	67%	93%	+39%
I feel equipped to refer youth to resources in my community for support.	67%	100%	+49%

#3: These are 2018 responses from officers attending an SFY training from a small county in Indiana, with a city police department and sheriff's office.

Statement	Percent Agree <b>Before</b> Training	Percent Agree <b>After</b> Training	Relative % Increase
"I feel equipped to recognize and work with youth with mental health issues."	50%	100%	+100%
"I feel equipped to recognize and work with youth who have experienced trauma"	50%	100%	+100%
"I feel equipped to help youth regulate their behavior"	50%	100%	+100%
"I feel equipped to refer youth to resources in my community for support"	40%	82%	+105%

Additionally, when asked to share the impact of the training in the comments section of the post-training evaluation, officers' responses include:

- *This taught me the need to calm down, slow down, to be willing to try different approaches with teens.*  
— POLICE OFFICER, FRESNO, CA
- *Any law enforcement officer involved in dealing with youth should take this training. In my opinion this should be a part of Indiana's law enforcement academy.*  
— POLICE OFFICER, INDIANAPOLIS
- *This has been my favorite training so far. It shows how invested VBPD is to ensure we are operating the smartest way instead of doing things because that's how it has always been.*  
— POLICE OFFICER, VIRGINIA BEACH, VA
- *Only in my dreams would I have thought that I would ever see this kind of dialogue with our police...learning about the teen brain and how to be sensitive to it. Amazing!*  
— EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF the WOOTEN CENTER, LOS ANGELES, CA

SFY has recently revised its pre/post training surveys to focus more on addressing whether officers felt better equipped after the training to interact with youth. The new version, inaugurated in 2019, developed with the pro bono assistance of the Analysis Group and Dr. Roland Stark of Integrative Statistics, an educational impact research firm, is attached in Appendix A.

## **2. Tracking Reduced Rates of Arrest:**

Whenever possible, Strategies for Youth works with law enforcement and community partners to track how its trainings contribute to reductions in arrests for minor offenses such as “resisting arrest” and “disorderly conduct.” However, due to the lack of any systematic requirements for record-keeping by police departments, these rates are often difficult to track and report. Below is an incomplete summary that we have compiled as accurately as possible.

### Patrol Officer Training Impacts:

- Virginia Beach Police Department (2015-2018)
  - 28% reduction in misdemeanor arrests
  - Humanitarian Award for the *Policing the Teen Brain* training officers of the Virginia Beach Police Department, presented by the City of Virginia Beach
  - 700 officers trained
- Tippecanoe County, IN (2014-2018)
  - 44% reduction in total juvenile arrests,
  - 32% reduction in juvenile arrests for battery against an officer, during the two years following the *Policing the Teen Brain* training.
  - 300 officers trained in 3 police departments and the sheriff's department
- Charlottesville, VA (2015-2018)
  - 59% reduction in juvenile arrests
- Lewiston, ME (2015-2017)
  - 34% reduction in juvenile arrests
- Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department (2014-2019)
  - SFY was not given access to juvenile arrest data in this department;

- Deputy Chief Waters became the first law enforcement leader in Indianapolis history to receive the Mayor's Citizenship Award, for the positive impacts of the PTB training and *Juvenile Justice Jeopardy* games in the city.
- Trained 350 officers; 35 officers trained to be JJJ game leaders.
- As a result of SFY's impacts in Indianapolis, the state of Indiana granted all counties adopting the Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative (JDAI) funding to hire SFY to train its officers.
  - SFY has trained officers in 22 Indiana counties since 2014.
- Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority Police Department (1999 to 2009)
  - 84% decrease in juvenile arrests for minor offenses in the 5 years following the *Policing the Teen Brain* training with no decrease in public safety.
  - Assistance in creating StopWatch Initiative which
  - Recognition as a national model by the International Association of Chiefs of Police
  - All 240 officers trained.
- Cambridge, MA Police Department
  - 70% decrease in juvenile arrests for minor offenses (2008 to 2018)
  - 80% decrease in runaways and other status offenses through referral to youth programming in the Safety Net.
  - Recognition for promoting a trauma-informed approach to policing by the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
  - All 270 officers trained.
- Everett, MA Police Department
  - 50% decline in juvenile arrests over 3 years.
  - 100 officers trained.

Pre/Post Arrest Data Forthcoming:

- Washing Metropolitan Area Transit Authority Police Police
- Idaho Statewide
- Omaha Juvenile Arrest Data

School Resource Officer Trainings:

- Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department, NC (2012)
  - 32% reduction in school-based arrests despite a 24% increase in calls for service.
- Fresno Police Department (2015-2017)
  - 60% decline in school-based arrests
- Spokane Public School System School Security (2016)
  - 84% decrease in school-based arrests for minor offenses as well as a 14% increase in felony-level arrests. Officers report they "have the time" to focus on serious offenses since learning how to deal more effectively with minor problems.
- Omaha Police Department, NE (2016)– O
  - 57% decrease in school-based juvenile arrests in the city's public schools during the 12 months following the *Policing the Teen Brain in School* training.
- Clarke County School Districts, WA (2017)—Evergreen School District juvenile arrest /court referral rate declined from 230 to 143.



### **Peer-Reviewed Research:**

Recently, Policing the Teen Brain was the subject of a peer-reviewed research article (*Matthew C. Aalsma, Katherine Schwartz & Wanzhu Tu (2018) Improving police officer and Justice personnel attitudes and de-escalation skills: A pilot study of Policing the Teen Brain, Journal of Offender Rehabilitation, 57:7, 415-430, DOI: 10.1080/10509674.2018.1523819*).

In this study, Aalsma, Schwartz and Tu reported “significant differences between mean pre- and post-survey responses” among law enforcement personnel who attend the training with regard to the methods and skills necessary to de-escalate officer-youth interactions. A copy of the article is enclosed.

SFY recently joined with faculty from John Hopkins University School of Public Health to submit a proposal for federal funding to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of the impact of its trainings.

### **Impacts of the *Juvenile Justice Jeopardy Games***

SFY has offered the *Juvenile Justice Jeopardy* game since 2010. We began playing a “street” version of the game in Massachusetts. Since then, we have added a “School” version and expanded the game’s reach to jurisdictions in 18 states.

*Juvenile Justice Jeopardy*™ (*JJJ*) is SFY’s complementary program offered to youth. It is taught by law enforcement patrol and school resource and probation officers, defense attorneys, prosecutors, teachers, youth program leaders in after-school programs, detention centers, and community centers where youth congregate. Using an interactive and engaging format, *JJJ* teaches young people how to navigate interactions with peers and law enforcement, strategies for desisting involvement in criminal activities, how to understand the legal consequences of their behavior, and the long and short-term collateral consequences of arrests. The game helps youth develop, through role playing and scenario-based activities, practical and effective strategies for interacting peacefully and positively with police. It is an effective and popular program for all youth, including those who are already court-involved.

SFY develops the game to adhere to state law and is further customized to address the top reasons youth in the particular jurisdiction are being arrested and charged. SFY develops the game with an ad hoc committee of juvenile justice system stakeholders who review drafts of proposed game questions and answers. Once we have reached consensus, we provide on-site training of game leaders as well as conduct pilot games to demonstrate how to present the material and how youth respond.

SFY provides a pre/post test for the Street game, developed with pro bono assistance from the Analysis Group and Dr. Roland Stark of Integrative Statistics. A copy of that survey is attached.

Below we highlight typical responses to evaluation survey questions that illustrate the need for youth to obtain this type of information:

When asked whether, after playing *JJJ*, “do you feel prepared to handle your next interaction with an officer?” the top answer was:

- “Because they told us what to do and act when we see a cop,” followed by
- “Because I learned what to say/do,” followed by
- “Now I know how to stay calm,”
- “I have an understanding of my rights and responsibilities,” and



- “Don’t run.”

Every one of these responses may prevent a teenager from being arrested.

In response to the question, “*What information that you learned while playing the game will you share?*”

- 62% wrote “Hanging out with people who take risks can get you in trouble, even if you aren’t doing risky stuff,”
- almost half wrote “At 18 you go to adult court, even if you are in high school,”
- 47% wrote “Male police officers can pat frisk females,” and
- 43% wrote “Your juvenile record is not automatically sealed at age 18.”