

## Making Your State a Model Juvenile Justice State At the Front End of the System

### Integrating Policies, Training, and Oversight for Best Outcomes for Youth and Public Safety.

#### *Does your state offer this?*



#### **Policies for Law Enforcement Agencies and Patrol Officers**

Statewide model policies incorporating developmentally appropriate, trauma-informed, racially equitable directives supporting best practices for law enforcement/youth interactions and ensuring officer adherence to state law for interactions ranging from investigatory stops to interrogations.



#### **Training for Patrol Officers**

Statewide, uniform, mandated training for law enforcement officers at the recruit and in-service levels, based on curricula that aligns with statewide policies and juvenile law, and is regularly updated to reflect new statutes and caselaw, that teaches officers practical skills and strategies for using developmentally appropriate, trauma-informed practices with youth.



#### **Certification of Officers who Regularly Interact with Youth**

Certification that ensures officers who regularly interact with youth (School Resource Officers, Patrol Officers assigned to Housing Authorities and Transit, etc.) are equipped and prepared to work with youth, are in good standing, have demonstrated effective de-escalation strategies, understand trauma-informed practices, have no sustained complaints/lawsuits for their interactions with youth, and are versed in state policies for interactions with youth.



#### **Partnerships Between Law Enforcement Agencies and Providers**

Officers and agencies that do not have strong partnerships with youth-serving community-based organizations—after school programs, mental health services, shelters, and services for immigrant youth—are often limited to three types of responses to youth in need of services or experiencing mental distress: arrest, referral to an emergency room, or a “wait and see” response. Initiating and supporting strong partnerships with community-based youth-serving providers offer law enforcement officers alternatives to arrest and incentivize their use of community referrals instead of juvenile justice referrals.



#### **Sustainability**

Effective training of law enforcement officers and routine updating of policies ensures that officers are equipped to interact effectively with youth and achieve the best possible outcomes for these interactions. Sustaining these strong front-end systems requires that agencies develop a reliable funding stream for training resources, personnel and legal review.

## 5 Reasons Why Your State Will Benefit By Investing in the Front End of the Juvenile Justice System

- 1 Interactions with Youth are Complicated:**

Law enforcement interactions with youth can be difficult, frustrating and complicated. Many children and teens are involved with multiple systems simultaneously, each of which carry distinct regulations, policies and laws regarding their treatment. These include schools, child welfare, mental health and developmental disabilities service agencies as well as the juvenile justice system. The increasingly complex needs of youth and demands on law enforcement necessitate increased attention on how to support officers in their responses to youth.
- 2 Officers Want and Deserve Meaningful & Up-to-Date Training:**

Preparing officers to understand how youth differ from adults in how they perceive risk, experience fear, crave peer approval, process information and act toward authority figures is key to keeping their interactions with youth positive, and to reducing their use of arrest, force, and formal complaints against young people. Officers increasingly seek, but cannot always access, this type of state-approved training. Providing this instruction to officers, first during cadet academy, and subsequently through in-service offerings, ensures that they are updated on all statutory and legal changes and well-versed in youth-specific strategies for de-escalation and crisis interventions.
- 3 Officers & Agencies Need Policies for Youth Interactions:**

States typically assume law enforcement agencies adopt policies that distinguish the treatment of youth from adults. Unfortunately, many agencies do not adopt policies. The result is that officers, without policies to guide them, often treat youth like adults. Using developmentally-appropriate, trauma-informed policies “right-sizes” officers’ responses to youth conduct and ensures they protect youth with disabilities. Developing statewide model policies builds accountability and enhances the legitimacy of law enforcement agencies within communities. Statewide policies can also reduce differences in treatment of youth across jurisdictions.
- 4 No Policies + No Training = More Lawsuits:**

The fiscal and human costs of not adequately equipping officers to interact with youth in adherence to state and federal law are significant. Nationally, the number of lawsuits against law enforcement officers brought on behalf of youth has more than doubled since 2000. It is in the interest of law enforcement, youth, and communities to ensure officers receive the training, guidance, information, and skills they need to use field-tested best practices during encounters with young people.
- 5 Certified Officers Will Be Better Equipped for Youth Interactions:**

Of the 47 states that offer certification of officers, none offer standards for certifying officers as equipped to interact with youth. The objective of certification is to develop and implement statewide, uniform policies and standards in the service of creating systems and mechanisms of accountability. By establishing hiring and training requirements for certification, state agencies can prevent use of violence and force against officers, keep officers from committing misconduct that puts them at legal and civil risk, and ensure better outcomes for youth.