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## **CJJ Announces 2020 Honorees**

The Coalition for Juvenile Justice (CJJ) is honored to recognize leaders in the youth justice field during our annual awards luncheon November 19th. The ceremony will take place during CJJ's 2020 [virtual conference](#). Each year, CJJ leaders, members and allies gather to recognize and celebrate individuals who exemplify excellence, dedication, and commitment to CJJ's core mission to improve the youth justice system and create better outcomes for youth, families, and communities.

Nominated and selected by CJJ members, each national award recipient has made significant and inspiring contributions to the juvenile justice field at the local, state, and national levels. CJJ has selected four outstanding individuals to recognize in 2020 for their tireless efforts in improving the juvenile justice system.

The 2020 honorees include: Ezequiel Vasquez, recipient of the Spirit of Youth Award; Jessica Wheeler, recipient of the Tony Gobar Outstanding Juvenile Justice Specialist Award; Ken Schatz, recipient of the CJJ A.L. Carlisle Child Advocacy Award; and Anna Lopez, recipient of the Andrew Smith Award.

The Spirit of Youth Award recognizes and celebrates a young adult who overcame personal obstacles in their life, but is now making significant contributions to society. This year's awardee, Ezequiel Vasquez, has gone above and beyond to use his lived expertise to help others who are also involved with the youth justice system. Currently incarcerated, Ezequiel is working to help others inside his detention facility and the broader community.

The Tony Gobar Award is given in honor of a state juvenile justice specialist who has done outstanding work to improve juvenile justice. This year's award is presented to

Jessica Wheeler, former CJJ Executive Board member, for her constant compassion and support of all youth, especially those who have experienced challenges and barriers throughout their lives. Jessica serves as a voice for Juvenile Justice Specialists across the country and is a leader in her field.

The A.L. Carlisle Child Advocacy Award is awarded to an individual who has made outstanding contributions to youth, to juvenile justice improvement efforts, or in the broader area of juvenile justice and delinquency prevention concerns. Ken Schatz has accomplished exactly that while serving as a significant, voluntary leader of the Coalition for Juvenile Justice for more than two decades. Ken played an instrumental role in strengthening CJJ and senator relations and was actively involved in the 2002 Reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act.

And our newest award, named in honor of Andrew Smith, is presented to a Racial and Ethnic Disparities Coordinator who has made outstanding contributions to the elimination of Racial and Ethnic Disparities in the juvenile justice system. In addition to being Colorado's Racial and Ethnic Disparities Coordinator, Anna Lopez facilitates the Coalition for Minority Youth Equality. In both of these valuable roles, Anna has been able to implement changes in policy and practices to reduce the disproportionate entry of youth of color into Colorado's juvenile justice system.

CJJ values the contributions of both young pioneers, who are just beginning to make their mark, and dedicated leaders who have devoted decades as champions for youth. We hope these outstanding individuals inspire others to serve their communities with the same distinction. Join us for CJJ's first ever virtual conference. To learn more [click here](#).

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The Coalition for Juvenile Justice (CJJ) envisions a nation where fewer children are at risk of delinquency; and if they are at risk or involved with the justice system, they and their families receive every possible opportunity to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives. CJJ is a nationwide coalition of State Advisory Groups (SAGs) and allies dedicated to preventing children and youth from becoming involved in the courts and upholding the highest standards of care when youth are charged with wrongdoing and enter the justice system.