Executive Summary

Stepping Up: Strengthening Police, Youth & Community Relationships is a report that presents the findings and recommendations of the Youth Justice Board, an after-school program that engages New York City teenagers in studying public policy issues that affect young people. Since August 2014, the Youth Justice Board has focused on how young people who have been arrested, especially older teens, can avoid further justice system involvement and benefit from meaningful interventions while still being held accountable for their actions. As part of its research, the Board also explored community-level police-youth relationships. In the 2015-16 program year, the Board will work to implement many of the ideas contained in this report.

The Youth Justice Board focused its research on early diversion programs, which allow arrested young people an opportunity to have their cases resolved early in the criminal justice process. Over four months, the Youth Justice Board interviewed 33 experts and conducted three focus groups with young people who have had personal experience with arrest and diversion programming. The Youth Justice Board developed seven recommendations to increase and improve diversion programs and improve police-youth relations in New York City:

A. EMPOWERING POLICE, YOUTH, AND THE COMMUNITY TO SUPPORT IMPROVED POLICING
   1. Create regular opportunities for police and youth to interact in positive ways.
   2. Consult with youth to develop community-specific resources that explain the work of police officers and the criminal justice system.

B. CONNECTING ATTENDANCE TO FUTURE OUTCOMES
   3. Support youth after arrest by providing them with confidential access to social workers.
   4. Develop resources that improve police officers’ interactions with LGBTQ youth and young women of color.

C. ADDRESSING STRUCTURAL BARRIERS TO SCHOOL ATTENDANCE
   5. Provide youth with clear information about case process to facilitate engagement, transparency, and easy access to diversion programs.
   6. Include youth input on short-term diversion programming to ensure that it is responsive to the needs of young people.
   7. Expand diversion eligibility.

To download the full report, please visit www.courtinnovation.org/yjb.