Police-Youth Dialogue Project

The Center for Court Innovation’s Police-Youth Dialogue Project, funded by the U.S. Department of Justice’s Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) Office, will create a toolkit on organizing teen-police dialogues. The toolkit will guide jurisdictions around the nation that wish to implement facilitated conversations between police and young people as a means to build trust and understanding between them.

Police-teen dialogues allow participants to speak honestly about their experiences and, in doing so, find common ground.

Drawing from projects across the country that use positive communication strategies to improve police-youth relations, the toolkit will consolidate this expertise and provide promising practices in a single, concise resource.

This project will summarize research on current practices, explain the rationale for implementing teen-police dialogues, and provide guidance on how to carry out these conversations.

The project builds on the Center for Court Innovation’s extensive experience collaborating with law enforcement and community groups, including a video documenting a teen-police dialogue called Talking It Through.

The project is seeking advice from experts, including community organizations, law enforcement agencies, and national organizations, as well as young people previously involved in youth leadership programs. These partners will help identify promising models, highlight potential challenges, and make recommendations to be incorporated in the toolkit.

To inform the development of the toolkit, project staff will explore innovative approaches in focus groups with young people and police officers in the Brownsville community of Brooklyn, where the Center is establishing the Brownsville Community Justice Center. The neighborhood is historically a high-crime community, now designated by the city as an “impact zone” for increased police presence. The neighborhood also has a high percentage of young residents: approximately one third of Brownsville’s population is younger than 18. These factors make Brownsville an ideal place to test new community oriented policing strategies.

The Practitioner’s Toolkit on Police-Youth Dialogues will be released online in 2015.