

The Coalition for Juvenile Justice is committed to taking a firm stance to boldly address racism within the youth justice system. CJJ was one of the first organizations to call attention at the federal level to the need to address disparities that exist within the youth justice system. The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act now serves as one of the only federal laws that directly require states to address racial and ethnic inequities within their systems.

CJJ is committed to moving to concrete action that will not just address but end these disparities. We are committed to advancing anti-racist work to address the current inequities in our system. We recognize the nationwide, historical compounding of trauma and oppression that contributes to racial and ethnic disparities in the juvenile justice system. While these recommendations don't address all of that, we are starting this work at the front end of the justice system, with a focus on law enforcement and schools, policies and practices, as well as the day-to-day decisions of professionals in these fields, and how they contribute to the ongoing criminalization of Black, Indigenous, Hispanic and other young people of color, as well as LGBTQA youth and youth with differing ranges of intellectual and physical abilities.

Reaffirm and Strengthen the commitment to train those working with youth and families

I. Ensure teachers, school administrators, and other youth serving professionals adequately understand young people and the impacts of racial bias on youth of color.

Whereas, young people are not merely miniature adults, but instead have been recognized both through science and by the U.S. Supreme Court to be still developing and more likely to engage in risky and impulsive decision making;

Whereas, only 20 percent of teachers in America's schools were people of color,¹ and thus may not possess an understanding of the cultures and needs of their students;

Whereas research has shown bias in school disciplinary practices, resulting in the disproportionate expulsion and discipline of students as young as preschool;²

¹

<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/08/27/americas-public-school-teachers-are-far-less-racially-and-ethnically-diverse-than-their-students/>

²

<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/news/2017/03/30/429552/4-disturbing-facts-pre-school-suspension/>

We recommend: providing federal funding to ensure that teachers, doctors, therapists, and other who come into contact with young people receive training on restorative practices, racial bias, cultural humility, culturally and linguistically responsive mental health, culturally and linguistically responsive adolescent brain development, culturally and linguistically responsive trauma, culturally and linguistically responsive ways to interact with young people with special needs, and culturally and linguistically responsive ways to interact with families. We further recommend that they receive training on adverse childhood experiences and culturally and linguistically competent restorative practices. We recommend that educators be required to receive these courses as part of their certification process.

We further recommend providing additional funding and training for attorneys who defend youth, particularly when the youth or parents are declared indigent. We recommend providing prosecutors specialized training on youth and implicit bias, providing judges similar training, as well as guidance on steps to take or policies to implement to help ensure youth understand their rights and responsibilities.

II. Improve training for law enforcement regarding interactions with youth as a means of eliminating racial and ethnic disparities.

Whereas, interactions with law enforcement are often the first contact that a young person has with the youth justice system;

Whereas, the nature of modern society is such that young people come into contact with law enforcement frequently throughout the day, at school, while in their neighborhoods, and while using public transportation and frequenting public spaces;

Whereas, research has shown that law enforcement, much like other decision makers, exhibit racial and ethnic bias in their decision making processes about when to approach and/or detain a young person,³

Whereas, current requirements for law enforcement training rarely prioritize specialized, in-depth training on how to interact specifically with young people,

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<https://www.njjn.org/our-work/creating-meaningful-police-and-youth-of-color-relationships---njn-policy-platform---oct-2017>

We recommend: providing federal funding to ensure that law enforcement officers who come into contact with young people are trained annually on racial bias, cultural humility, mental health, adolescent brain development, trauma and adverse childhood experiences, as well as how to interact with young people with special needs, and how to interact with families. Training grants must include funding to measure evaluation and implementation so that departments that don't demonstrate a long-term change in behavior will lose future funding for such training. Training should be focused on positive interactions with youth and ways to avoid militarization of these interactions.

III. Prioritize hiring of diverse trainers, including young people and families of color, and those with lived experience with the justice system.

Whereas, budgets can be seen as both financial and moral documents, that reflect the values that we share in ending racism;

Whereas hiring decisions can serve as a way to hold entities and organizations accountable in their work to address inequities;

Whereas young people and families of color, particularly those with lived experience in the justice system, bring important expertise in training others;

We recommend: Prioritizing federal funding for racial equity and related training related to young people and families that are led by and done in partnership with young people of color and their families.