

JUVENILE JUSTICE ADVISORY COUNCIL

2024 THREE-YEAR PRIORITIES

Priority 1: Serve children at home, with their families, and in their communities.

Goal 1: Minimize system contact for low-risk youth, especially youth of color, by developing formal, statewide diversion opportunities through implementation of structures and policies at early juvenile justice system processing.

- Objective 1: Expand Pre-Charge diversion opportunities statewide.
- Objective 2: Support implementation of Credible Messengers, peer to peer mentoring and navigation, by providing training to community leaders and funding allocation as needed.

Goal 2: Partner with state and local efforts to expand a full spectrum of gender and culturally-responsive, and trauma informed care practices for community-based services for youth.

- Objective: Offer and share evidence-based, research-based and/ or promising practices training and educational opportunities to providers.

Goal 3: Advocate for a minimum age of 14 years of age for delinquency proceedings for juvenile court, with exceptions for forcible felonies, by modifying Iowa Code 232.

- Objective 1: Draft legislative proposal.
- Objective 2: Utilize HHS structure to advance related legislation.

Goal 4: Eliminate delinquency petitions that are filed to protect girls and/or youth of color when community safety is not an issue.

- Objective 1: Identify best practices to support alternatives that do protect girls and youth of color without increasing formal juvenile justice processing.
- Objective 2: Encourage use of the guidelines for determining whether to handle a complaint formally or informally as laid out in, “Juvenile Delinquency Guidelines: Improving Court Practice in Juvenile Delinquency Cases” (NCJFCJ) or similar best practice documents.

Goal 5: Reduce detention holds that are the result of probation violations.

- Objective 1: Explore becoming a Vera Institute “Ending Girls Incarceration” site.
- Objective 2: Research detention usage using data broken down by race/ethnicity, gender and zip code.
- Objective 3: Secure funding to research detention usage by examining case files for trends by race/ethnicity, gender and zip code.

- Objective 4: Advocate for a reduction in the use of juvenile detention for probation violations by modifying Iowa Code 232.
- Objective 5: Evaluate the impact of juvenile tracking.
- Objective 6: Advocate for reduced Detention Screening Tool overrides for probation violations.

Priority 2: Enhance quality of life, services and opportunities for youth in the juvenile justice system.

Goal 1: The juvenile court system should be the primary court of jurisdiction for youth accused and adjudicated of delinquent behavior. It is the goal of the JJAC for Iowa to have a justice system where youth are exclusively served by the juvenile court system; with rare exceptions.

- Objective 1: Eliminate direct file - allow juvenile court to have exclusive jurisdiction of all juvenile offenders, except when the juvenile court waives jurisdiction. Legislation required: Modify Iowa Code §232.8, sub-section 1, paragraph “c”.
- Objective 2: Juveniles may only be waived to be prosecuted as an adult for felony violent offenses. Legislation required: Amend Iowa Code §232.45, add “...that would be classified as a felony if committed by an adult”.
- Objective 3: Court-sealing/record-sealing expansion/procedural reform (alterations to 232.150). Explore how Iowa’s system to seal and expunge juvenile court records could be more effective and efficient. It should be a system that is understandable and can be navigated by youth and families. This would require alterations to Iowa Code §232.150.

Goal 2: Champion quality of life for youth in out-of-home placements (group homes/ QRTPs, detention centers, State Training School, and shelters). “Get what you need, earn what you want”.

- Objective 1: Set standards for a youth Bill of Rights and grievance processes.
- Objective 2: Partner with other HHS divisions to make Transition Information Packet (TIP Binder) youth friendly and practically useful.
- Objective 3: Advocate for quality legal representation and developmentally appropriate court experiences for youth in the juvenile justice system.
- Objective 4: Advocate that youth receive timely medical attention when in court ordered placement.
- Objective 5: Advocate for clear shackling policies and consistent trauma-informed trainings.
- Objective 6: Advocate youth will not be shackled during medical appointments, with the exception for documented safety concerns.

- Objective 7: Advocate against shackling of youth who are 22 weeks pregnant or further along.
- Objective 8: Develop principles and guidance for programs to implement policies and procedures that ensure the least invasive person searches, using the standards and requirements detailed in the federal Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA).
- Objective 9: Develop principles and guidance for programs to implement policies and procedures that ensure nationally recognized and bonded de-escalation techniques are implemented to reduce the need and use of physical restraints.

Goal 3: HHS requires female and culturally-responsive training for all facilities serving youth involved in the juvenile justice system.

- Objective 1: Advance placement and service alternatives for females (e.g. enhanced/STAR foster homes designated as female-responsive) to fill gaps for girls formally involved in the juvenile justice system.
- Objective 2: Develop culturally-responsive and female-responsive training and technical assistance for QRTP facilities.

Goal 4: Continue to support and evaluate the Reentry Navigator program for viability and expansion.

- Objective 1: Explore additional funding for continued support and expansion of the Reentry Navigator program.
- Objective 2: Support youth to get their vital documents (birth certificates, IDs, social security cards), including youth who are immigrants or refugees.
- Objective 3: Explore avenues to expand the population of youth who are eligible for Reentry Navigator program assistance.
- Objective 4: Implement and analyze pre- and post-surveys to assess the program for fidelity.

Goal 5: Advocate for trauma-informed design principles in physical spaces where youth and family interact with the juvenile justice system.

- Objective 1: Partner with the Iowa State University Department of Landscape Architecture to advance related concepts as appropriate.
- Objective 2: Draft legislation to require trauma-informed court waiting room areas.

Priority 3: Advance healing-centered care.

Goal 1: Support the integration of healing-centered, authentic youth and family engagement into juvenile justice policies, practices, and programs.

- Objective 1: Propose a shared definition of “support system” for Juvenile Court Services, QRTPs, State Training School, shelters, and detention centers to use.
- Objective 2: Ensure youth have free, daily access to their family while in the system by addressing barriers to transportation, restrictive policies, and mindsets of professionals working with youth.
- Objective 3: Advise on an authentic engagement framework for Juvenile Court Services.
- Objective 4: Support districts and providers to create local youth and family advisory councils to address juvenile justice opportunities and concerns within their community.
- Objective 5: Advise on a Parent Partner model for juvenile justice.
- Objective 6: Develop healing-centered authentic youth and family engagement training for youth-serving professionals.

Goal 2: Increase Juvenile Court Services usage of female-responsive and culturally-responsive practices.

- Objective 1: Advocate for the creation of Girls Courts in all Judicial Districts.
- Objective 2: Advocate for the creation of all female specialized JCS units or caseloads in all Judicial Districts.
- Objective 3: Advocate that HHS providers and juvenile court personnel are required to participate in ongoing specialized bias training and coaching around decision-making regarding youth of color. Training should be research-based, progressive, ongoing and result in an implementation plan.

Goal 3: Increase knowledge about juvenile justice issues that affect key impacted populations. *Key impacted population refers to population groups disproportionately affected by disparities (e.g., racial and ethnic minorities, urban vs. rural populations, individuals with disabilities, LGBTQ+ communities)*

- Objective 1: Explore the disparities and related issues that exist for LGBTQ youth.
- Objective 2: Explore issues for girls related to immigration and juvenile justice.
- Objective 3: Explore issues for youth in adult court, including specialized settings.