m1 DEPARTMENT
OF HEALTH

Adverse Childhood Experiences in Minnesota:
Juvenile Justice System Involvement

Youth who have been involved with the juvenile justice system have higher rates of trauma exposure and other experiences that can negatively impact youth development, such as caregiver incarceration, exposure to and experiencing violence, poverty, and disruption of family relationships (Duron et al., 2022; Baglivio, 2019; Evans-Chase, 2014). Moreover, youth may experience further harm while involved with the juvenile justice system, including disruptions to family and peer relationships and education (Russell & Taylor, 2017; Yoon et al., 2021). These experiences can lead to higher risks of concerns related to substance use, behavior, suicidal ideation, social skills and relationships, employment, and mental health (Baert & Verhofstadt, 2015; Baglivio, 2019; Duron et al., 2022; Evans-Chase, 2014; Russell & Taylor, 2017; Yoon et al., 2021). For the most current local data on justice-involved youth, please visit MDH's interactive Adverse Childhood Experiences Data (www.web.health.state.mn.us/communities/ace/data/index.html).

Relevant indicator(s):

■ Juvenile justice system involvement

Strategies for promoting school and community safety and positive peer and community relationships can also help prevent juvenile justice system involvement and support youth who have been involved in the system.

However, there are several effective strategies to prevent juvenile justice system involvement, mitigate and prevent harms from involvement, and promote resiliency and well-being among youth with a history of involvement.

Effective strategies

Strategies for preventing juvenile justice system involvement and supporting youth with experience in the system include:

■ **Diversion and prevention programs** to prevent system involvement and provide an alternative to standard court case processing, which can prevent harms associated with involvement in the justice system, including a criminal record. These programs can vary widely, from law enforcement processes that provide the option to "warn" youth without further consequences; case management and addressing basic needs that contribute to criminal behavior; mental health interventions and skill-building; prosocial activities, such as career planning and mentoring; and restorative justice practices, such as circle discussions (Development Services Group, 2010; Development Services Group, 2017; Farrell et al., 2018; Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2021b).

- **Programming and services for youth currently involved with the juvenile justice system.** This type of programming often involves educational programs and interventions that aim to support youth mental health, increase academic engagement, explore their interests, and learn new skills, such as problem solving, emotion management, and communication (National Institute of Justice Crime Solutions, 2015; National Institute of Justice Crime Solutions, 2021; Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 2021a). This type of programming may also include mentoring, specialized education settings, involving family members in services and improving family relationships, and helping youth prepare for reentry into the community (Development Services Group, 2019a; Development Services Group, 2019b; National Institute of Justice Crime Solutions, 2016; Walker et al., 2015; Youth.gov, 2023).
- **Staff training and ensuring safe, comfortable, and trauma-informed practices and environments.** To support youth and mitigate the negative impacts of system involvement, juvenile justice staff should be well trained, and trainings should promote understanding of trauma, its impacts on youth, and how staff can develop positive relationships with the youth they serve (Burrell, 2013). Additionally, juvenile justice settings and their physical environment can help support youth well-being and avoid causing further harm. Practices may include universal trauma screening, avoiding solitary confinement and use of force, using physical "markers" to indicate inclusivity (e.g., LGBT+ pride flags), and ensuring there are ways for youth to confidentially report their concerns.

Examples of Minnesota initiatives

Clay County's Restorative Justice Program

Clay County's Restorative Justice Program uses a restorative approach to addressing youth crime. It may be used as a diversion strategy away from the standard court case process or as part of a case outcome. The program focuses on understanding the crime and how the crime victim was impacted, holding the youth who committed the crime accountable, and identifying ways the youth can repair the harm they caused.

More information about Clay County's Juvenile Diversion Program (claycountymn.gov/184/Restorative-Justice)

The Link

The Link provides a wide range of services to prevent youth involvement in the juvenile justice system and to support youth who are involved. Services include a supervised youth center open 24/7, programming that can serve as detention alternatives, case management services for youth on probation, culturally specific parent support services for African American parents, and programming specifically for certain gender identities.

More information about The Link Youth Advocacy Division (thelinkmn.org/programs/youth-advocacy-division/)

Examples of national initiatives

Enhancing Law Enforcement Response to Children Exposed to Violence and Childhood Trauma

The Enhancing Law Enforcement Response to Children Exposed to Violence and Childhood Trauma project aims to improve law enforcement's understanding of trauma and their ability to identify and work with youth who have experienced violence or trauma. The project is a collaboration between the International Association of Chiefs of Police, the Childhood Violence Trauma Center at the Child Study Center at the Yale School of Medicine, and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention at the U.S. Department of Justice. The project offers a toolkit, trainings, and webinars.

More information about [Enhancing Law Enforcement Response to Children Exposed to Violence and Childhood Trauma (www.theiacp.org/projects/enhancing-law-enforcement-response-to-children-exposed-to-violence-and-childhood-trauma)](https://www.theiacp.org/projects/enhancing-law-enforcement-response-to-children-exposed-to-violence-and-childhood-trauma)

Reentry to Resilience (R2R)

The Reentry to Resilience program (R2R) provides tailored, wraparound support to youth transitioning back into their community from juvenile facilities in North Carolina. The program aims to reduce recidivism, improve academic outcomes, develop independent living skills, and connect youth to prosocial activities and career development opportunities.

More information about [Successful Transitions (cisnc.org/empower-students/youth-reentry/)](https://cisnc.org/empower-students/youth-reentry/)

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