



2023 Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention Plan

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE SHAPIRO-DAVIS ADMINISTRATION

March 2024

Recommendation #1: Champion historic investments in upstream prevention, intervention, and engagement strategies that can pay dividends for Pennsylvania’s future.

- **Budget:** The Governor should propose an unprecedented \$50 million in a new “Youth Prevention & Engagement” line item within PCCD’s budget. Funds would accelerate implementation of a wide range of evidence-based youth prevention and intervention strategies designed to help youth reach their full potential – from mentoring to [out-of-school-time programs](#) to pre-arrest deflection and diversion programs and beyond.
- **Policy:** Direct state agencies to identify ways to leverage guidance, regulations, funding priorities and grants, and other mechanisms to expand youth prevention programs.
- **Data/Research:** Dedicate 5% of appropriated “Youth Prevention & Engagement” funding to invest in evaluation and research of upstream prevention programs, with a focus on seeking active input from youth and families.

Recommendation #2: Address chronic workforce challenges in the juvenile justice system by developing a new comprehensive strategy to address system staffing needs.

- **Policy:** Direct Pennsylvania’s Workforce Development Board (WDB) and other relevant agencies and offices to develop a comprehensive statewide workforce development strategy for the juvenile justice system and related youth-serving sectors.

Recommendation #3: Make a call to action directing the JJDPC to develop a ‘whole of government’ and community-informed statewide action plan for addressing the urgent crises facing the juvenile justice system, including supporting at-risk and justice-involved youth along an equitable continuum of care and opportunity.

- **Policy:** Direct the Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention Committee (JJDPC) and relevant state agencies to work together to develop consensus-based policy, programmatic, and funding recommendations within one year for consideration by the Governor and Lt. Governor.

Recommendation #4: To address the current crisis and prevent others in the future, evaluate the Commonwealth's short and long-term needs related to residential treatment and detention centers and take steps to expand availability of high-quality nonresidential alternatives.

- **Policy:** Direct the JJDC to assess Pennsylvania's short- and long-term needs and current capacity for out-of-home beds, as well as ongoing monitoring of secure detention and residential bed capacity.
- **Funding:** Invest in community-based diversion programs and alternatives to incarceration for youth to prevent youth from moving further into the system (see Recommendation #1).

Recommendation #5: Increase resources for oversight and monitoring to ensure the safety of youth and staff in Pennsylvania's residential and detention facilities, and overall system accountability.

- **Policy:** The Juvenile Court Judges' Commission (JCJC), in partnership with DHS, PDE, and PCCD, should develop more proactive monitoring of juvenile detention and residential facilities, including monitoring facility incident reports, identifying negative data trends, and taking corrective action as necessary (including providing technical assistance supports).
- **Funding:** The Governor should propose investing an additional \$2 million in the state budget to increase the JCJC's complement for this purpose (FY 2023-24 appropriation was \$3,152,000).

Recommendation #6: Develop and invest in youth-informed/co-developed strategies to prevent and reduce gun involvement and gun violence.

- **Policy:** The Shapiro-Davis Administration should spearhead the development of a comprehensive youth gun involvement and violence reduction plan for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.
- **Funding:** Continue to champion state investments in programs like the Violence Intervention and Prevention (VIP) Grants, which have supported a wide range of strategies and programming to prevent and reduce gun involvement among at-risk youth. The Administration should also continue to advocate for and support increased resources for victims' services and compensation.
- **Data/Research:** Direct the JJDC to examine youth in the juvenile justice system who have gun-related charges, including exploring the major correlates of youth gun involvement and sources of supply, as well as the motivations for gun possession.

Recommendation #7: Direct relevant state agencies to implement and evaluate pre-arrest and school-based diversion programs as well as other promising strategies to reduce referrals to the juvenile justice system.

- **Policy:** Revisit Chapter 10 (Safe Schools) regulations and related sections of the School Code to determine whether incidents should be reported to law enforcement, as well as other policy changes to reduce unnecessary involvement in the juvenile justice system.
- **Funding:** Direct agencies to leverage available state and federal funding streams to increase adoption of school-based diversion programs across Pennsylvania.
- **Data/Research:** Invest in research/evaluation of deflection, pre-arrest and school-based diversion initiatives. Pursue strategies to improve the availability and quality of data related to pre-arrest diversion programs in the Commonwealth. Direct PDE and PCCD's School Safety and Security Committee (SSSC) to monitor and track data on referrals to school-based diversion programs, as well as relevant data related to school-based incidents, arrests, etc. Examine data and relevant outcomes for youth in Alternative Education for Disruptive Youth (AEDY) programs.

Recommendation #8: Increase investments in juvenile probation and standardize use of evidence-based screening instruments and case management tools as a condition of funding.

- **Policy:** The JCJC should require the use of the PA Detention Risk Assessment Instrument (PaDRAI) by all counties in Pennsylvania as a condition of receiving state funds and should also ensure that statewide validation studies and a review of quality assurance protocols for screening and assessment instruments are conducted every 4-5 years.
- **Funding:** The Governor should propose a \$10 million increase for the Juvenile Probation Services line item (for a total of \$28,945,000) in the FY 2024-25 state budget, complementing the Governor's recent call for increased investments in adult probation services in FY 2023-24.
- **Data/Research:** Explore the feasibility of establishing pre-arrest diversion programs in Pennsylvania jurisdictions where these programs are currently unavailable. Examine current 'rates' at which Youth Level of Service (YLS) and PaDRAI are utilized with fidelity and identify potential opportunities to improve consistent use of these tools.

Recommendation #9: Direct the JJDPCC to examine potential adoption of "raise-the-age" policies to align Pennsylvania's juvenile justice system with the latest research on brain development and the potential for rehabilitation among young adults.

- **Policy:** The Governor should direct the JJDPCC to analyze available data, engage relevant stakeholders, and share findings and recommendations with the Governor's Office within a year.