

Smart, Safe and Fair: Smart, Safe, and Fair II: Creating Effective Systems to Work with Youth Involved in Violent Behavior

ADVOCACY: BUILDING BROAD-BASED COALITIONS

Successful advocacy for juvenile justice reform requires a broad-based coalition of various stakeholders. Coalitions should include victims of crime, families of youth, legal advocates, government advocates, foundations and non-profit organizations. These coalitions are crucial to overcoming opposition from politicians, labor unions representing correctional staff and others.

CRIME VICTIMS

Victims of crime can be powerful voices of support - or opposition - therefore early outreach to victims' organizations in coalition building is essential.

Not all victims organizations have the same perspective.

The Alliance for Safety and Justice and its affiliate, Crime Survivors for Safety and Justice advocate for criminal justice reform alongside victims rights. On the other hand, organizations like Crime Victims United advocate for long, mandatory, prison sentences.

Justice involved youth and their families are a key group in the push for reform.

WASHINGTON D.C.

Justice for DC Youth Coalition helped impact the policy recommendations of Mayor Williams' blue ribbon commission and later advocated for the adoption of those recommendations. Kenny Barnes, the father of a young man who had been murdered by a 17-year-old, advocated against pushing youth into the adult criminal justice system. He formed the organization Reaching Out to Other Together, Inc.

VIRGINIA

RISE for Youth lobbied for the closure of juvenile correctional facilities and adoption of community-based approaches.

Victims' advocates saw youth as victims themselves and supported reforms.

MILWAUKEE

Youth Justice Milwaukee engaged youth, families, and people who had been incarcerated as minors, to advocate on behalf of positive youth justice reforms.

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LEGAL ADVOCATES

Use the courts to call attention to problems within the juvenile justice system.

Starting point for challenges to abuses within the system

Include diverse types of legal advocates.

Defense counsel.

Counsel for individuals or organizations suing the state, its representatives, and its facilities.

Lawsuits can help garner enhanced media coverage.

GOVERNMENT ADVOCATES

VIRGINIA

Governor McAuliffe led advocacy for juvenile justice reform.

WISCONSIN

Racine County Circuit Judge Richard Kreul wrote to then-Governor Scott Walker regarding the abuses at Copper Lakes and Lincoln Hills youth prisons in Wisconsin. The letter resulted in the removal of all youth from Racine County committed to the youth prisons.

Additional reports of abuse at the youth prisons came from Milwaukee County Human Service Department Staff and the State Public Defender's Office.

NEW YORK

New York State Office of Children and Family Services Commissioner Gladys Garrion launched a strategic communications and advocacy strategy "Empty Beds, Wasted Dollars" to close New York's youth prisons and transform the state's juvenile justice system.

Philanthropic Foundations

Foundations play an important role in funding reform efforts. They can provide research and create momentum, as well as planning and implementation support.

WASHINGTON D.C.

Annie E. Casey Foundation helped to fund Mayor Williams' Blue Ribbon Commission on Youth Safety and Juvenile Justice Reform, which spurred reform legislation.

New York

Tiger Foundation and The Atlantic Philanthropies funded Governor Patterson's Task Force on Transforming Juvenile Justice.

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NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

Represent the broad array of groups involved in and impacted by the juvenile justice system, including community members, organizations, victims of crime, youth involved in the juvenile justice system, and their families.

Work to ensure that these stakeholders have a voice in the reform process.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

It is critical for success to build a broad-based coalition to support juvenile justice reform that includes legal, governmental, non-profit advocacy organizations and foundation advocates.

It is crucial to include both victims and families of youthful offenders in coalitions.

Broad-based coalitions can provide assistance in a range of areas: financial, technical, expertise, legal, public opinion.

Coalitions can draw on sources of support that are often overlooked.

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