

Youth of Color & the Juvenile Justice System

I. Focus Summary

- a. There is a large disparity between the amount of white youth that are incarcerated and the amount of youth of color that are incarcerated.

II. Incarceration & Arrest Stats

- a. Sources have reported that overall youth incarceration has experienced a marked decrease. Teen Vogue and other sources have reported while there is an overall decrease in youth incarceration, there are large ethnic disparities.
- b. Youth of color are five times more likely to be incarcerated compared to white youth.
- c. Youth of color are three hundred percent more likely to be arrested for simple assault, compared to white youth. Simple arrest is one of the most common reasons youth are arrested.
- d. Youth as young as fourteen years old are being tried as adults. The majority of those being tried as adults at such a young age are youth of color.
- e. References:
 - i. <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/criminal-justice-system-discriminates-children-of-color>
 - ii. <https://www.wnyc.org/story/black-kids-more-likely-be-tried-adults-cant-be-explained/>

III. Factors

- a. **Race Relations:** The long history of poor relations between the police and justice system and communities of color not only affects adults of color but also affects youth of color.
- b. **Socioeconomic Status:** Socioeconomic status many determines where communities of color live and do not live. If communities of color are resigned to certain areas – especially those that have high crime – these areas are heavy policed, which increases the chances that youth will encounter the police and the juvenile justice system.
- c. **Community Resources:** The level of community resources a teen has can determine the type of support they have and how they spend their free time. This may affect how likely youth are to be get into trouble.
- d. **Family:** The family system and dynamics a youth has and experiences affects youth's likelihood to interact with the juvenile justice system. If a parent/guardian experiences incarceration, this increases the likelihood that the youth will experience incarceration or some type of involvement with the juvenile justice system.
- e. **Support Systems:** Who provides support and the type of support that youth receive affects their likelihood to interact with the juvenile justice system. If there are people invested in a youth's life that are encouraging them to be involved in positive extracurricular activities, to create and attain goals, etc. youths are less likely to get into trouble.
- f. **Adolescent Brain vs. Adult Brain:** Research shows that youth are not as mature as adults in terms of their brain structure or brain function. Research also shows that the adolescent brain differs from the adult brain insomuch that this affects adolescents' criminal activity and criminal involvement.

g. References

- i. <https://www.nap.edu/catalog/14685/reforming-juvenile-justice-a-developmental-approach>
- ii. <http://issues.org/28-3/steinberg/>
- iii. <http://aaswsw.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/WP4-with-cover.pdf>
- iv. <http://aaswsw.org/grand-challenges-initiative/12-challenges/ensure-healthy-development-for-all-youth/>
- v. <http://aaswsw.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/WP10-with-cover.pdf>

IV. **Current Programming:**

- a. Smart on Juvenile Justice: Technical Assistance To End Racial and Ethnic Disparities in the Juvenile Justice System
 - i. **Mission:** This program addresses the “disproportionate” contact between the juvenile justice system and youth of color. The intention is for juvenile justice employees to employ a more informed model when dealing with youth in the juvenile justice system.
 - ii. **Program Details:** This program develops and provides a range of “education, training, technical assistance, and resources” that teaches culturally competent and developmentally appropriate approach to juvenile justice.
 - iii. **Intended Participants:** This program is intended for those who work in various areas of the juvenile justice system that serve youth of color who are already involved with, or are at risk of being involved with, the juvenile justice system (i.e. state governments, local governments, tribal governments, private organizations, etc.). The program is intended for a variety of stakeholders including but not limited to: “state and local DMC coordinators, state advisory groups, juvenile justice and child welfare specialists, law enforcement officers, prosecutors, judges, legal advocates, other child-serving professionals, and community members.”
 - iv. References
 1. <https://www.ojjdp.gov/grants/solicitations/FY2017/REDTTA.pdf>

V. **Future Programming**

- a. **Expand the Smart on Juvenile Justice program.**
- b. **Implement the Smart on Juvenile Justice program in all 50 states.**
 - a. **Focus on at least 1 city per state that has the largest youth of color population.**