



Kentucky can...



Prevent juvenile justice involvement and strengthen youth outcomes



Every child deserves to grow up feeling safe and supported, and to be equipped with the tools they need to thrive in adulthood. This is especially true for kids who are involved, or at risk of involvement, with the juvenile justice system. Research consistently shows that the formal court process and incarceration at a young age is traumatic, negatively impacts their development and education, and traps them in an increasingly difficult maze of problems.

When a child gets in trouble, they need interventions that address the root causes of their behavior.

Historically, Kentucky has failed to provide justice-involved kids, their families, and their communities with a comprehensive system of care that addresses many of the factors that drive juvenile delinquency. By creating a continuum of interventions, communities can implement a long-term solution that holds kids accountable and connects them to the resources needed to prevent future or further delinquent behavior.

Detention alone does not improve public safety.

- Kentucky data shows that children who complete a diversion program – meaning, their case was resolved outside of a formal court setting – are less likely to recidivate (1 in 5) compared to children whose cases are referred to formal court (1 in 3).
- It can cost an average of \$588 per day to incarcerate one child compared to approximately \$75 per day for diversion.
- Research also shows that children who complete these programs have a higher likelihood of completing high school, attending college, and earning more income in adulthood.

The goal of diversion is to reduce further involvement in the court system by providing programs based on education, treatment and accountability.

A diversion agreement provides tools to manage behavioral issues, including prevention and education programs; service learning projects; community service; restitution; curfew; school attendance; counseling; and treatment.

By supporting the development of a robust continuum of interventions with a demonstrated track record of effectiveness – that could include anything from educational support to career and housing services to mentoring programs – we can ensure that children and their families are supported before or during any involvement with the juvenile justice system and provide them with tangible services to keep them on the right track.

Blueprint for Kentucky's Children Policy Solution:

Expand investments so communities can build a continuum of care that supports youth and their families in addressing the root causes of delinquent behavior and prevent ongoing involvement with the juvenile justice system.



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