

THE ARTS AND JUVENILE JUSTICE

ACTION NEEDED

We urge Congress to:

- **Appropriate \$61.5 million for Title V Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Incentive Grants at the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP).**
- **Include report language instructing OJJDP to include the arts as an eligible component of its prevention, diversion, reentry, and residential juvenile justice grant programs.**

TALKING POINTS

- **The arts are effective in improving outcomes for youth at risk or involved with juvenile justice systems.**
 - The arts have a robust history of research and practice demonstrating their effectiveness in improving outcomes for justice-involved, at-risk, and traumatized youth. In 2016, OJJDP and NEA published a joint [literature review](#) that highlights promising arts-based and art therapy practices.
 - According to the National Endowment for the Arts' (NEA) longitudinal study, *The Arts and Achievement in At-Risk Youth*, at-risk students who have access to the arts in or out of school tend to have better academic results, better workforce opportunities, higher career goals, and more civic engagement.
- **There are promising arts programs working with at-risk youth throughout the country, but more work is needed to expand these supportive programs and formally connect them with juvenile justice systems.**
 - There is a role for the arts throughout the continuum; from prevention and intervention programs, to transition, healing, and restoration, there exist quality arts programs that can improve outcomes.
 - National grassroots networks such as Create Justice, the Creative Youth Development National Partnership, the Justice Arts Coalition, the Arts for Incarcerated Youth Network, and the Art for Justice Fund represent a diverse range of artists, cultural organizations, and justice professionals interested in and highly-qualified to activate innovative and promising programs.
- **Federal investment in the arts in juvenile justice prevention and intervention programs will:**
 - **Support state and local efforts** to invest in public-private partnerships between community-based arts organizations, law enforcement, and probation and parole offices.
 - **Establish national benchmarks and metrics** for evaluation of local and state juvenile justice systems utilizing the arts.
 - **Build an evidentiary base of promising and effective art-based and art therapy practices and model programs.**
- **There is a role for the arts to improve outcomes throughout the entire juvenile justice system.**
 - From prevention to diversion, to secure facilities, reentry, probation, and parole, there are effective and promising arts programs throughout the country that are improving the outcomes for youth and young people.

BACKGROUND

In FY 2020, Congress included instructions to the federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) to explore the use of the arts in its juvenile justice programming, with input from arts stakeholders and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA). Additionally, Congress included new funding and programmatic flexibility (which may include the arts) for Title V Delinquency Prevention Grants. Advocacy is needed to ensure Congress includes comparable funding and instructions to OJJDP in FY21 since the Administration's FY 2021 budget proposal calls for a cut of \$92.5 million to OJJDP.

In any given year, an estimated 2.1 million youth under the age of 18 are arrested in the United States, and approximately 1.7 million delinquency cases are disposed in juvenile courts annually. A multisystem effort is required to ensure our nation's children avoid the justice system and are empowered to live safe, healthy and fulfilling lives. The arts are an effective tool for working collaboratively across sectors to achieve positive outcomes for youth. There are many points of possible engagement with the arts across the entire juvenile justice system, ranging from prevention to high-quality arts education for youth in state secure facilities, to the use of arts programs as an alternative to sentencing, and to support successful re-entry into communities.

OJJDP and NEA have a history of meaningful arts and justice collaborations, including the 1995 YouthArts Development Project, the publication of a 2002 *Guide to Promising Practices in Arts Programs for Juvenile Offenders in Detention and Corrections*, and the 2016 literature review. NEA's national Shakespeare in American Communities program, which brings educational programs to thousands of underserved middle and high school students each year, now includes a dedicated grant opportunity for theater professionals to engage youth in the juvenile justice system. We urge further OJJDP/NEA collaboration and the exploration of other interagency collaborations, such as through the Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs (IWGYP) or the Interagency Task Force on the Arts and Human Development, to identify and disseminate promising and effective cross-sector strategies.

In addition to research, in recent years there has been a dramatic expansion of interest in local arts programs serving justice-involved youth. The Arts Education Partnership at Education Commission of the States, with support from the National Endowment for the Arts and the U.S. Department of Education, recently published a report in 2020 on opportunities for the arts in juvenile justice at the community, state, and federal levels. This report will be shared with Congress, as well as arts and juvenile justice stakeholders, and will cite specific examples of high-quality arts programs working across the entire juvenile justice continuum.