

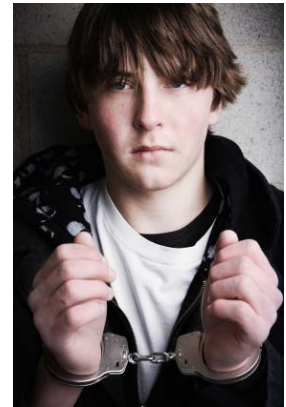


# MICHIGAN JUVENILE JUSTICE COLLABORATIVE

A project of the Michigan Council on Crime and Delinquency  
Telephone: (517) 482-4161 • Fax (517) 482-0020 • Website: [www.miccd.org](http://www.miccd.org)

## MJJC - Working for Michigan's Forgotten Children

Far too many of Michigan's most vulnerable children - particularly those affected by trauma, abuse, neglect, mental illness, and disability - either drift into or are referred into a juvenile justice system that is inappropriate and ill equipped to serve their needs. Family Court Judges and staff report that some children become subjects of a delinquency petition because that is the only way to ensure services for the youth's protection and needs. Unfortunately, the juvenile justice system can do more harm than good for many of these youth.



Numerous surveys have revealed that there is a disproportionate number of youth of color within the juvenile justice system and there is an increasing trend of girls entering the system, nearly all of whom have experienced physical and/ or sexual abuse. The criminalization of typical adolescent behavior has resulted in a wave of punitive policies, including increased incidences of children being prosecuted, sentenced, and incarcerated as adults. Rather than promoting education of our next generation of workers, broad zero-tolerance policies and lack of due process in the schools set children on a direct course to prison.

Once in the system, children often waive counsel without understanding the potentially catastrophic consequences, or are represented by court appointed attorneys who lack resources and training. Although the system was created to provide guidance and rehabilitation for wayward youth, courts have few, if any, options to recommend necessary mental health or family support services. As a result, detention and incarceration are often the only options for a child that needs treatment. Abundant research exists on the best practices for addressing the needs of this fragile population; yet Michigan continues to choose to discard the state's most valuable resources – our children.

**The mission of the Michigan Juvenile Justice Collaborative is to advance policies and practices that prevent delinquency, promote rehabilitation, and support transitional services for youth involved in the juvenile justice system and raise awareness about the need for best practices that are equitable and just.**

MJJC envisions Michigan as a national leader with innovative and effective policies and practices that provide support, resources, and opportunities for youth involved in the juvenile justice system or at risk of entering the system. The civil and human rights of children must be elevated to the highest priority, ensuring equitable access to education, employment, health and mental health services, social services and family support.



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## MJJC 2009 - 2010 Priorities

1. **Prevention** - Provide families and communities with the resources to properly care for and educate Michigan's children, particularly those with special needs.
  - Increase the use of Balanced and Restorative Justice principles to address conflict resolution and violence prevention in schools
  - Participate in a strategy to address the School-to-Prison Pipeline
  - Support efforts to enhance youth mental health services and mental health parity
2. **Intervention** - Address the needs of youth in the justice system in a way that is developmentally-appropriate, strength-based, and individualized to meet the unique needs of each child.
  - Advocate for legislative reform regarding public defense services for juveniles
  - Advocate for legislative reform regarding juvenile competency to proceed in delinquency hearings
  - Advocate for legislative reform to end the sentencing of youth to life without the possibility of parole
3. **Reintegration** - Assist youth who are transitioning from out-of-home placement back to their home communities by establishing necessary supports for housing, education, employment, and other services.
  - Provide technical assistance to the Department of Corrections and the Department of Human Services as they initiate re-entry and aftercare services for youth returning from prison or out-of-home placement.
4. **Equity** – Draw attention to the disproportionate number of youth of color in the juvenile justice system and pursue strategies to ensure equitable access to resources and culturally competent services.
  - Highlight the disproportionate impact that the School-to-Prison Pipeline has on youth of color
  - Support efforts to collect and analyze data and implement pilot projects to reduce disproportionate minority contact
5. **Outreach & Education** - Participate in opportunities to educate juvenile justice and child welfare stakeholders about emerging research and best practices.

Contact the Michigan Council on Crime and Delinquency to learn more.  
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