



# JUSTICE FOR EVERY LOUISIANA CHILD

**LOUISIANA CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS**

Defending the right of Louisiana's children to  
fairness, dignity, and opportunity

**THREE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN**

January 1, 2015 – December 31, 2017

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# **This is a plan to build a state that takes care of its most vulnerable children.**

It is a plan for creating the supports and providing the opportunities that keep children out of the juvenile justice system.

It is a plan for defending children who do fall into the justice system—protecting their rights, standing up for their dignity, keeping them safe, and helping them to win strong legal and life outcomes.

It is a plan for transforming the juvenile justice system so that it no longer relies on failed strategies that waste children's lives and countless public dollars.

When we implement it, this plan will leave us with a smaller, smarter juvenile justice system. It will protect thousands of our children.

We need this plan because too many Louisiana children fall into the juvenile justice system every year. And every year brings more research showing that the juvenile justice system is itself harmful, increasing recidivism and diminishing prospects for a happy and prosperous life.

We need the plan because Louisiana locks up too many children, even though 200 years of experience show us that juvenile prison is a failed enterprise. It does not keep children safe, does not reduce recidivism, and does not help kids develop in positive ways.

We need the plan because Louisiana prosecutes too many children as adults. That practice is worse than a failure. It's a fantasy. Our justice system has no alchemy that can transform a boy into a grown man.

We need the plan because behind everything in our justice system is the reality of racial disproportionality that defies mathematical explanation. This year in New Orleans, almost 97% of arrested children were African-American.

**But the life and liberty of every Louisiana child matters.**

The Louisiana Center for Children's Rights is a nonprofit law center that defends the right of every one of our children to fairness, dignity, and opportunity.

We are policy analysts, law reform advocates, and community partners who design and build the supports and opportunities that children need to thrive in their own homes and communities.

When children fall into the juvenile justice system, we are their lawyers, social workers, investigators, education advocates, and case managers. Our Children's Defense Team – the juvenile public defender in New Orleans and one of the foremost juvenile defenders in the country – uses an innovative model of holistic, team-based, cross-disciplinary advocacy to win both legal and life success for vulnerable youth in nearly 1,200 cases each year.

And the Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana (JJPL), our policy reform and impact litigation arm, has 17 years of experience fighting for a juvenile justice system that is fair, compassionate, and supportive of positive youth development.

We have engaged more than 60 stakeholders in the development of this strategic plan. The plan articulates the focus and direction of our work over the next three years. It highlights the results we seek to produce and the strategies we will employ.

In the justice system, we hear so much about holding children accountable for their behavior. This plan is here so that we, too, can be accountable for delivering on the promise of desperately-needed change.

*We look forward to this critically important work. We hope that you will join us in it!*

Sincerely,



**Marsha Levick**  
Board Chair



**Josh Perry**  
Executive Director

# Values, Vision, and Mission

Our Core Values guide  
everything we do:

## **EMPOWERMENT:**

We believe that all young people have equal rights, dignity, worth, and humanity. We ensure that their voices are heard on issues that affect them.

## **LOYALTY:**

We stand up for our clients, advocating for their expressed goals and interests. We stand with our colleagues, allies, and partners to defend young people.

## **RESILIENCE:**

We champion children with zeal that is inspired by the courage, perseverance, and resilience that we find in our clients and their families. We work with diligence and dedication.

## **CREATIVITY:**

We use innovative methods to accomplish our goals and the goals of the young people whom we serve. We work in cross-disciplinary teams and with a wide variety of partners to accomplish our mission.

## At the Louisiana Center for Children's Rights, we envision...

- A state where all young people are empowered to thrive in their own homes and communities;
- A fair and compassionate juvenile justice system that promotes positive youth development and protects the rights and dignity of every young person;
- A statewide community of skilled, committed, and fully-resourced advocates for children.

## We defend the right of every Louisiana child to fairness, dignity, and opportunity.

- Our holistic defense helps young people achieve their legal and life goals;
- We advocate and litigate for a transformed juvenile justice system that is fair, compassionate, and promotes positive youth development;
- Our leadership and partnerships strengthen communities and expand opportunities for all children.

# Executive Summary

This Strategic Plan maps out our work-our activities and our results-over the next three years.

# OUR WORK:

We will focus in four key areas:

1

**BUILDING OPPORTUNITY** Through partnerships, public education, and policy advocacy, we will strengthen the systems and build the supports that keep vulnerable children out of the justice system. We will:

- a. Advocate for educational equity in New Orleans' public schools
- b. Promote effective collaboration among providers of services and supports for vulnerable youth in New Orleans
- c. Remove legal barriers to life success for New Orleans' children

2

**DEFENDING CHILDREN** Through direct services, training, and technical assistance, we will fight for fairness and help children in the juvenile justice system win strong legal and life outcomes. We will:

- a. Improve our model of holistic juvenile defense in New Orleans, and advocate for stronger defense services for children statewide
- b. Ensure the provision of legal counsel for every child in Louisiana's juvenile prisons
- c. Support the development of specialized legal counsel for children in Louisiana's criminal justice system

3

**TRANSFORMING JUVENILE JUSTICE** Through impact litigation and policy advocacy, we will bring about a juvenile justice system that is fair, compassionate, and developmentally appropriate—a system that uses community supports, not prison, to help children grow and thrive. We will:

- a. Promote decarceration of children and reinvestment in communities across Louisiana
- b. Improve conditions and services for children in juvenile justice facilities statewide
- c. Keep children out of the adult criminal justice system
- d. Build a smaller, smarter juvenile justice system in New Orleans, with fewer children and better supports

4

**STRENGTHENING THE ORGANIZATION** To realize our goals through the development of our human and financial resources. We will:

- a. Improve financial sustainability
- b. Invest in staff
- c. Improve data collection, analysis, and dissemination
- d. Enhance organizational leadership
- e. Build strong partnerships



**Because of  
Our Work...  
By December 31, 2017:**



**FEWER CHILDREN** will be caught up in Louisiana’s juvenile and criminal justice systems. We will:

- ▶ Reduce the number of children in Louisiana’s juvenile justice system by at least 20%
  - ▶ Reduce the number of children in Louisiana’s adult criminal justice system, setting our baseline with data gathered in 2015
- 



**A FAIRER JUSTICE SYSTEM** will better protect the rights and dignity of our young people. We will focus on a critical aspect of fairness— access to quality legal counsel. To protect the right to counsel, we will:

- ▶ Ensure that every child in Louisiana’s juvenile prisons has a lawyer who meets the highest standards of practice
  - ▶ Provide 100% of our clients with high-quality, holistic legal representation that meets the most demanding juvenile defense practice standards in the country
- 

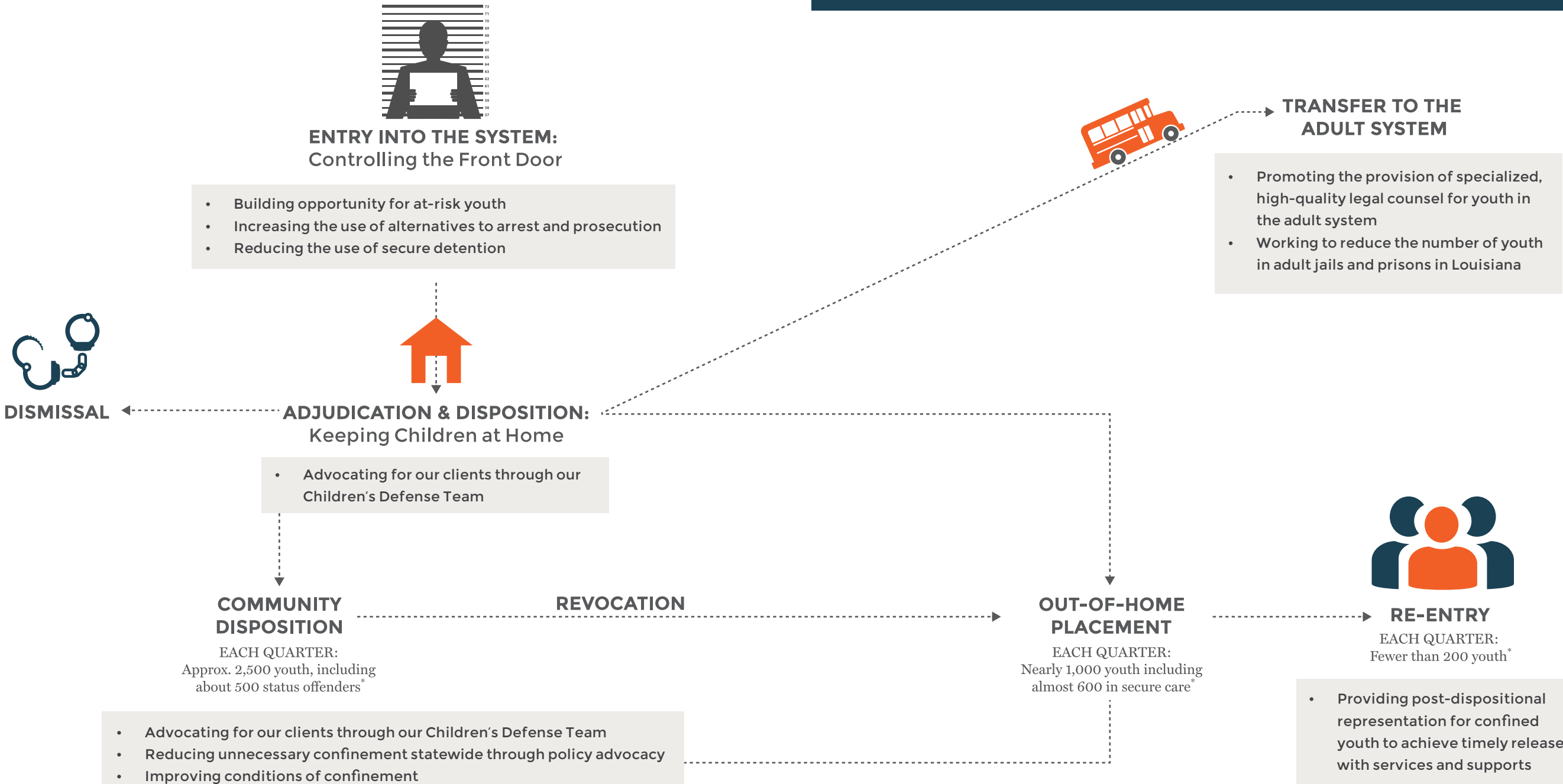


**Children who are involved in the juvenile and criminal justices systems will achieve BETTER LIFE OUTCOMES.** We will:

- ▶ Ensure that 100% of Louisiana’s juvenile custody facilities—prisons, group homes, and detention centers—meet standards for the safety, welfare, and care of children, as determined by regular and credible inspections
- ▶ Increase the percentage of children in juvenile justice custody who are earning high school credits from 8% to at least 36%, bringing Louisiana in line with the average among Southern states

# The Path Through Louisiana's Juvenile Justice System

Our work impacts youth at every point in the system



\* Reflects the average number of youth served in OJJ settings each quarter, from the 4th quarter of 2011 through the 3rd quarter of 2014



# Building Opportunity

“The widespread overuse of suspensions and expulsions has tremendous costs... Suspended students are less likely to graduate on time and more likely to be suspended again, repeat a grade, drop out of school, and become involved in the juvenile justice system.”

– Arne Duncan, *U.S. Secretary of Education*

1

Through partnerships, public education, and policy advocacy, we will build the supports and opportunities that keep vulnerable children out of the justice system and make communities safer. We will:



#### a. **PROMOTE EDUCATIONAL EQUITY IN NEW ORLEANS' PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

##### **THE PROBLEM:**

Every child has the right to an excellent education, and commitment to school is one of the best protections against involvement in the juvenile justice system. But, in New Orleans' virtually all-charter school system, some schools have enrollment policies that keep the most vulnerable

children out. Some schools don't help every child learn by providing high-quality special education supports. And too many schools use exclusionary discipline that relies on the suspension and expulsion of students instead of education.

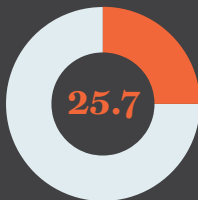
##### **LCCR'S RESPONSE:**

Real educational equity means that every child has an equal opportunity to enroll in high-performing schools and equal access to high-quality special education services. Educational equity also means the replacement of unnecessary exclusionary discipline with restorative approaches and positive behavioral supports.

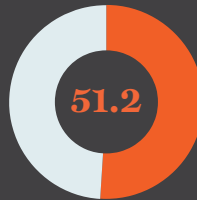
##### **We will promote equal access to educational excellence for every New Orleans child by:**

- i. Advocating for the right of every child in New Orleans' juvenile justice system to real educational opportunity. We will help vulnerable children enroll in school. We will defend them at expulsion hearings and in suspension appeals. And we will fight for their special education rights.
- ii. Providing public education and training for stakeholders—educators, parents, social workers, and youth advocates—who can keep children in school and out of the justice system.
- iii. Gathering and publicizing data on educational equity, and using our data and expertise to advocate with individual schools and at the systems level for reform in enrollment, special education, and disciplinary policies.

##### **KEY STATISTICS:**



The percentage of children appearing in Orleans Parish Juvenile Court who were arrested because of something that happened at school.



The percentage of youth prosecuted in New Orleans who reported a substantiated need for special education supports.



The percentage increase in the likelihood of school dropout when a child has been suspended once by the time he or she enters the 9th grade.



## b. PROMOTE EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION FOR VULNERABLE YOUTH IN NEW ORLEANS

### THE PROBLEM:

New Orleans' most vulnerable children need a continuum of high-quality community-based supports and opportunities to thrive and stay out of the justice system. But a lack of resources and coordination among providers can leave services fragmented, disorganized, and limited in their effectiveness.

LCCR conducted a survey of providers who work with New Orleans youth between the ages of 14 and 18 who present with risk factors for justice system involvement. We found critical gaps in services, including shelter/respite care, mental health provision, mentoring, tutoring, and child care.

### LCCR'S RESPONSE:

**We will promote effective collaboration and collective impact efforts for vulnerable children in New Orleans by:**

- i. Continuing to lead the NOLA for LIFE services collaborative in developing a continuum of care for high-risk youth.
- ii. Using our data on the experiences and developmental needs of children in the justice system to inform and focus the delivery of supports and services to youth citywide.
- iii. Expanding LCCR's internal service provider directory and use of partner agreements to connect young people more effectively with needed services.

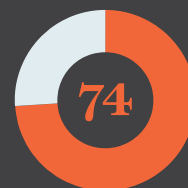
### KEY STATISTICS:

2

The average number of years a student who enters the juvenile justice system in New Orleans is behind in school.

  
1/7th

The proportion of New Orleans middle school students who say they have seen someone killed.



The percentage of youth in juvenile pretrial detention who say they have seen someone badly hurt or killed.

## Building Opportunity Success Story

### “John” Finds Strength in School

Losing a parent is devastating, especially for a young child. “John” lost his mother when he was 11 years old. After her passing, he packed his things and moved in with his father and step mother.

Months went by and John grew very sad. He loved school, but it was progressively more difficult to follow along. He wasn’t engaging in classroom activities, and he didn’t get along with his teacher. But school was a refuge. John continued to show up, finding comfort in the buzz of the hallways, and the silence at his desk.

Then the suspensions started. Minor infractions turned into more adverse behavior, and John received an out-of-school punishment. Day after day, he felt increasingly disconnected and alone. It finally became too much. John returned to school and, when approached by administrators, refused to leave campus. The police were called. John was arrested for criminal trespass and disturbing the peace.

When LCCR’s Children’s Defense Team began working on John’s case, the youth advocate discovered he hadn’t gone to school in weeks. When she contacted the school, they refused to let him return. Unwilling to accept the school’s decision, John’s youth advocate teamed up with his court-ordered case worker to campaign for his readmission. John’s case worker reached out to the school administrators while his LCCR team collected records, referred him to a high-quality mental health provider, and enrolled him in a mentoring and case management program.

The school agreed to his return. John is now enrolled in a school-based therapeutic program that better serves his needs, and a proper Individualized Education Plan (IEP) was fully implemented. John’s judge is excited about his progress, and the school principal says he’s proud of John’s hard work. Just recently, the principal emailed an LCCR social worker with an update: John is focused and happy, has built strong relationships with staff, including the school counselor, and has no new infractions.



## c. REMOVE LEGAL BARRIERS TO LIFE SUCCESS FOR NEW ORLEANS' CHILDREN

### THE PROBLEM:

Each year, nearly a thousand children under the age of 17 are arrested and pass through New Orleans' juvenile justice system. These arrests, and the prosecutions that follow, threaten long-term negative consequences. In addition to direct penalties such as incarceration, a juvenile adjudication can shut off access to vital forms of government assistance ranging from housing to

education. Even an arrest for which a child is not prosecuted has been shown to be a significant barrier to life success. A juvenile record can bar a young person from opportunities ranging from obtaining certification to work at the Port of New Orleans to accessing public housing.

### LCCR'S RESPONSE:

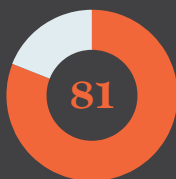
**We will help vulnerable young people and their families overcome legal barriers to success by:**

- i. Providing juvenile record expungement resources and hosting community clinics to assist youth in removing civil legal barriers to future opportunity.
- ii. Delivering "Know Your Rights" trainings and disseminating educational materials on the juvenile justice system.
- iii. Lifting up the voices of system-involved youth, empowering them to communicate their biggest barriers to success and identify solutions.

### KEY STATISTICS:



The percentage of formerly incarcerated adolescents receiving their high school diploma or GED as young adults.



The percentage of New Orleans juvenile arrests that involve neither guns nor a crime of violence.



The proportion of time that formerly incarcerated youth spent unemployed over a three year period, according to the Pathways to Desistance study.



# Defending Children

**2** Through direct services, training, and technical assistance, we will fight for fairness and help children in the juvenile justice system win strong legal and life outcomes. We will:



## **a. PURSUE EXCELLENCE IN JUVENILE PUBLIC DEFENSE IN NEW ORLEANS AND ACROSS LOUISIANA**

### **THE PROBLEM:**

Nationally and across Louisiana, juvenile public defense is too often under-resourced and marginalized. That hurts our kids. It's bad for public safety. And it undercuts the basic fairness that our society promises to every one of its children.

High-quality legal counsel can make all the difference in helping vulnerable children achieve both legal and life success. That means cross-disciplinary, team-based advocacy—with a social worker, a case manager, an investigator, and an

attorney. The defense team stands up for children in court, ensuring fairness and accurate results, and also connects them with the community-based supports and opportunities that can help them to stay healthy, graduate, and access meaningful higher education and vocational opportunities.

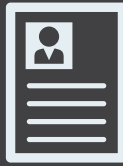
But right now in Louisiana, most children in the juvenile justice system don't have anything like that kind of advocacy.

## KEY STATISTICS:



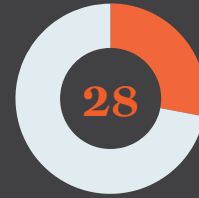
180

The dollars per case allocated for juvenile indigent defense by the State of Louisiana.



1,152

Number of cases in which LCCR represented youth in New Orleans last year.



The percentage by which a child's satisfaction with the results of his case increases if he is served by a holistic advocacy team, according to a path-breaking study of LCCR's client base.

## LCCR'S RESPONSE:

**We will work towards the day when all children in the juvenile justice system have excellent defense counsel to help them achieve their legal and life goals by:**

- i. Improving our model of holistic juvenile defense in New Orleans, where we serve as the juvenile public defender, through our Children's Defense Team and Reentry Project.
- ii. Providing technical assistance for juvenile public defenders across Louisiana and beyond, including training, case consultations, and management consulting.

### Children's Defense Team:

## A Model of Holistic Juvenile Defense

Nearly every child who is arrested and prosecuted in Orleans Parish is represented by the Children's Defense Team. This direct advocacy team—a youth advocate, a social worker, an attorney, and an investigator—works continuously with children from their first exposure to the justice system until they are free of state supervision. Our teams develop and implement comprehensive advocacy plans that defend clients' rights and respond to the causes and consequences of arrest and incarceration. This innovative defense model—the only one of its kind in Louisiana, but rooted in national best practices—makes a long-term difference in the lives of New Orleans' children.

A child arrested for a fight at school doesn't just need help in court. He needs his lawyer to come with him to his expulsion hearing, to win his readmission and ensure that special education supports are

in place; a social worker to recognize that his anger and anxiety stem from trauma, and to refer him to counseling; a youth advocate to help him get across town to his counselor, and to visit him at home and school, giving him guidance and support; and an investigator to find the community members who will testify to his strengths—commitment to church, or volunteering at a community center.

Since LCCR's Children's Defense Team hired its first social worker in 2010, the average number of Orleans Parish children in state juvenile justice facilities has fallen by 59.4%.

"Jeremy" serves as an example of the impact that the holistic defense approach can have:

At the age of 13, Jeremy was arrested and charged with armed robbery. He served one year in secure care—the term of art for juvenile prison—before the court released him with four years of supervised parole.

Jeremy is the oldest of three children. He resolved to be on his best behavior to set a good example for his younger siblings. And he did. For the next two years, Jeremy performed well in school and helped his parents with household chores. He was kind, soft-spoken, and respectful.

Then, in a few short, tragic months, Jeremy lost three of his closest friends to gang violence. Terrified that he would be the next target, he started carrying a gun. It was the only way he thought to protect himself.

One afternoon, the police stopped Jeremy and found the gun. He was charged with illegal possession of a firearm and his parole was revoked—meaning Jeremy had to return to jail. Taken from his family and grieving the deaths of his friends, he fell into a deep depression.

Teaming up with his mother, Jeremy's LCCR defense team made sure he received the proper mental health supports: he started taking medication and seeing a counselor on a regular basis. While incarcerated, he also earned his GED. Months into his sentence, he had a clean record with no write-ups or reprimands from the facility's staff.

Determined to return Jeremy to his family, his attorney helped Jeremy's mother complete a home study as part of a comprehensive reintegration plan. His LCCR advocates lined up a paid apprenticeship for him. And the judge agreed to send him home.

Now, weeks into his release, he's learning a new trade and enjoys the hard work and concentration it requires. In fact, he plans to pursue a degree from the community college to further master his skill. Jeremy's defense team also set up counseling services and he continues to receive the therapy necessary to cope with the trauma he experienced. Living at home again, Jeremy is finally content and eager to move forward with his life.



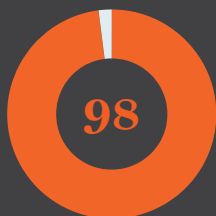
## **b. PROMOTE THE PROVISION OF LEGAL COUNSEL FOR EVERY CHILD IN LOUISIANA'S JUVENILE PRISONS**

### **THE PROBLEM:**

The juvenile justice system is a maze—and children cannot get out safely without legal counsel to help them. But right now, the huge majority of Louisiana's imprisoned children are effectively without legal counsel, even though state law promises them a lawyer. Children in juvenile justice custody do not earn “good time” credit for positive behavior, and there is no juvenile parole board. To prove that they

have earned the right to go home on supervised reentry, children have to appear before the judge who sentenced them. That's hard to do without a lawyer. Instead, children can spend pointless, expensive years in Louisiana's juvenile prisons. And, when those youth finish their terms, they will reenter their communities without services, supports, or supervision. That's neither good for public safety nor fair.

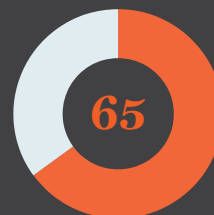
### **KEY STATISTICS:**



The percentage of surveyed children in Louisiana's juvenile prisons who had never been visited by their lawyers in custody, according to a 2014 survey conducted by LCCR.

**424**

The daily cost in dollars to imprison a child in Louisiana's juvenile prisons, according to Louisiana's legislative auditor.



The percentage of children in Louisiana's juvenile justice facilities who serve out their full sentences and are released without parole supervision, according to a 2013 report by the Louisiana Institute for Public Health and Justice.

### **LCCR'S RESPONSE:**

**We will ensure that every child in Louisiana's juvenile justice facilities has legal counsel and a real opportunity to prove that they have earned early release.**

**We will do this by:**

- i. Continuing to provide legal counsel and reentry supports for imprisoned children from St. Tammany, Washington, and Jefferson Parishes through our Second Chances Project.
- ii. Advocating at the systems level for the provision of fully-funded, high-quality legal counsel to all Louisiana children who are placed in the state's custody.

## Second Chances Impact

### Lawyers for Children in Custody: A Model that Works

In late 2013, the Louisiana Center for Children's Rights launched the Second Chances Project, providing legal counsel for youth from St. Tammany, Washington, and Jefferson Parishes who are committed to "secure custody"—the euphemism for juvenile prison.

In the next year, something extraordinary happened. Of the 79 youth whom LCCR represented in the project's first 12 months, we asked for parole in 28 cases. Twenty-three of those youth were sent home early.

The State of Louisiana has been saved the cost of incarcerating those youth for a total of 258 months—or 21.5 years. At \$424 a day, that's \$3,324,160 saved—a 27-to-1 return on an initial investment in legal counsel of just over \$120,000.

"Bobby's" story illustrates the difference that it makes when a child has a guide through the legal system's maze.

When he arrived at a state juvenile prison, Bobby had a seventh-grade education. He earned his GED in 13 months. In a total of 30 months in custody, Bobby never received a single code of conduct violation. He completed every vocational training program offered by the facility. At night, towards the end of his stay, Bobby took to borrowing plumbing manuals from the maintenance staff to study, so that he could prepare for a career on release. Juvenile custody had nothing left to offer him.

For 19 months after his sentence, Bobby never saw a lawyer. He was never brought back to court for a review hearing. The judge who sentenced him never had an opportunity to learn of Bobby's extraordinary growth and achievements.

In late 2013, Bobby met pro bono lawyers with LCCR's Second Chances Project. They urged the judge to hear his case, explaining that he had done everything he could to change. The judge listened. After hearing expert testimony about Bobby's low risk for recidivism, the judge released him. Bobby was saved 16 months in custody—and the State of Louisiana saved \$206,347 in the costs of incarceration. Six months after returning home, Bobby has found a job and is saving money to move into his own apartment.





# Stories of Success

## **“Mike” Reunites with Family After Prolonged Incarceration**

At age 14, “Mike” was sentenced to four years in juvenile prison and sent away from his home in a suburban Louisiana parish. In November 2013, Mike’s visit with his LCCR attorney marked the first time he had spoken with a lawyer since he went to prison two and half years before. And having a lawyer made all the difference. Three months after the initial meeting between Mike and his LCCR lawyer, the court released Mike from custody.

It hadn’t been an easy path. During his first year in prison, Mike’s mother passed away. He was only permitted to attend the wake escorted by a corrections officer, in shackles. With Mike’s mother gone, his uncle—who lives in Texas—became his guardian.

Mike was shuffled among three different juvenile prisons. At the first, the other youth bullied and beat him up; Mike was transferred for his own safety. The second facility abruptly closed. When he reached the third, Mike had an entirely new case manager, and his record of achievement in juvenile prisons to date—including a clean disciplinary record—was erased. Because of administrative red tape, Mike had to start at square one. He had nothing to show for all the progress that he had made.

Mike’s defense team did the detective work to gather his records as well as statements from his past case managers who recommended that he join his family in Texas. After filing a motion to modify—a request to the judge to reconsider the length of a sentence—Mike’s LCCR attorney set up a comprehensive reentry plan. With assistance from his uncle, the LCCR team enrolled Mike in Job Corps and located a mental health provider to ensure he receives the proper medication and counseling support. Now Mike is with his family in Texas, one year and six months before his scheduled release date.

## Defending Children Success Story

### Safe Housing and Support for “Charles”

“Charles” was just 13 when he was arrested and charged with simple burglary. His mother struggled financially, and she and Charles often went without food and steady housing. Because they frequently moved in search of shelter, Charles had difficulty attending school. When he did, he was hungry and exhausted. Desperate to help his family, he began looking for a way—any way—to bring home a few extra dollars. Charles soon faced a series of theft charges.

Then it got even worse. Charles and his mother were living outdoors as his trial approached, spending some nights huddled under an overpass. He was struggling with the pressure of his case and his homelessness, and the court—worried that his judgment was affected—ordered that Charles be held in a locked mental hospital pending trial.

Charles isn’t locked in a hospital anymore, and he isn’t homeless. His lawyer and social worker secured him a place in a group home where he has his own room, a ride to and from school, and three meals a day—the burger, he says, is his favorite. Working closely with Charles and his mother, his LCCR defense team showed the judge that Charles is full of potential—he is eager to learn, excited to engage with his peers, and happy to have a safe, reliable routine, as well as access to 24/7 counseling from an in-house support team.

His mother found affordable housing, and Charles visits her every weekend. She is focused on building a stable home where Charles can return to in the future. And the comfort and safety of the group home permits Charles to finally focus on school, social activities, and enjoying his childhood.



## C. PROMOTE SPECIALIZED LEGAL COUNSEL FOR CHILDREN IN THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

### THE PROBLEM:

Until we can entirely eliminate the counterproductive and immoral practice of prosecuting children as adults, we need to ensure that children in the adult system have strong, committed, skilled, expert advocates.

Right now, though, it is too often true that the juvenile defenders who have studied adolescent development are not the same lawyers who stand with 15 year olds before criminal court judges. This can result in

an unfair process and developmentally-inappropriate results.

Children who are prosecuted as adults need advocates who can protect their rights in front of criminal juries, but who also understand the ways that adolescent psychology and developmental forces impact youthful behavior and opportunities for positive change.

### KEY STATISTICS:

1966

The year the United States Supreme Court first said that children facing prosecution as adults need specialized protections.

0

The number of Louisiana state dollars dedicated to the specialized defense of youth who are facing a sentence of juvenile life without parole.



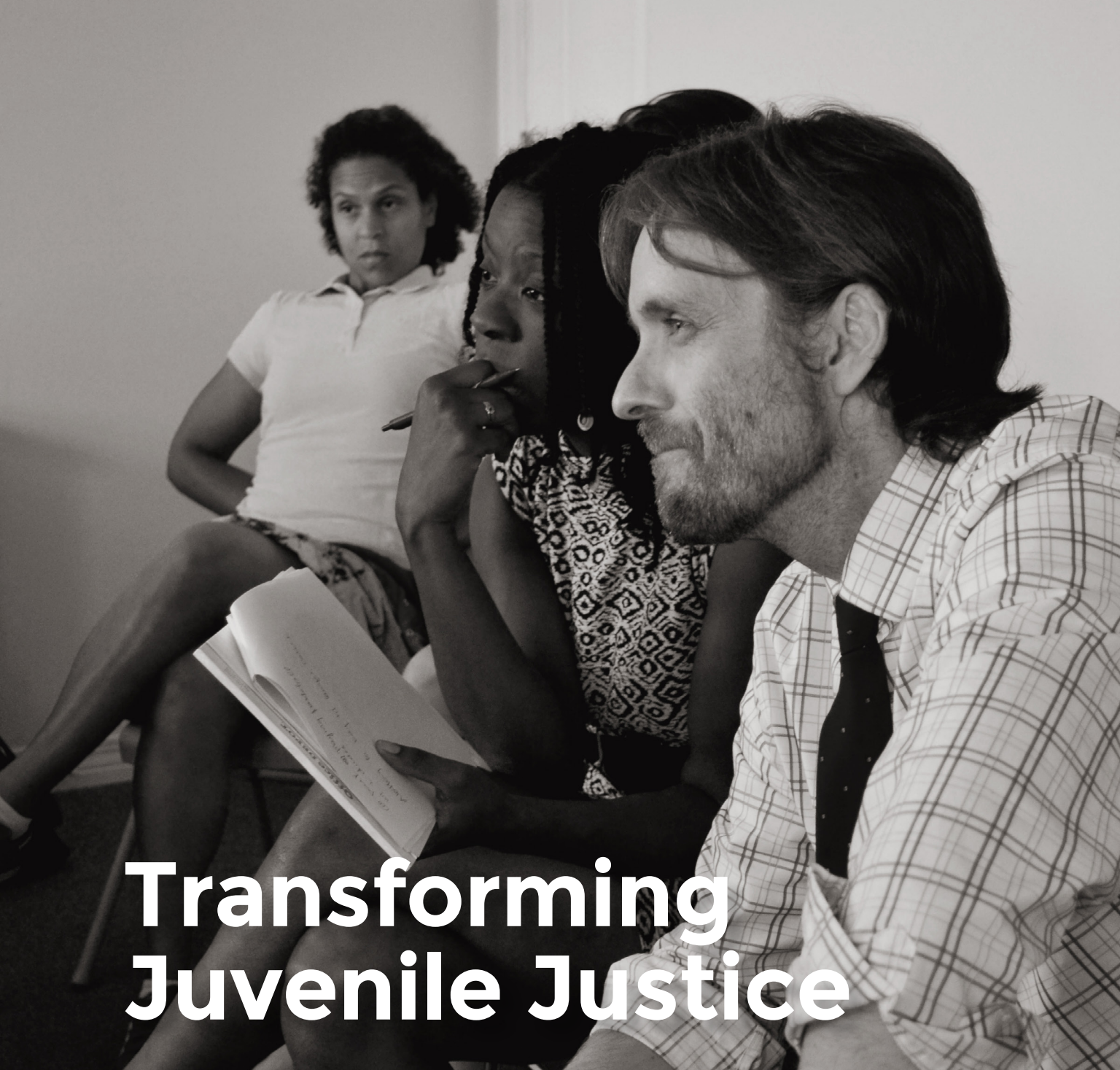
Louisiana's rank, among its sister states, for having the highest per-capita number of inmates facing life without parole in prison for an offense committed as a juvenile.

### LCCR'S RESPONSE:

**We will promote the provision of specialized, high-quality legal counsel for youth in the adult system by:**

- i. Developing and promulgating practice standards for the legal representation of young people in the adult criminal justice system, including young people facing the possibility of serving life without parole in prison and juveniles who are being prosecuted as adults.
- ii. Serving as a statewide resource counsel to support lawyers who are defending children in the criminal justice system.
- iii. Advocating for effective oversight and resources for the defense of youth in the adult criminal justice system statewide.





# Transforming Juvenile Justice

“There is no evidence that sharp reductions in juvenile incarceration cause any increase in juvenile crime or violence.”

– Annie E. Casey Foundation

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Through impact litigation and policy advocacy, we will bring about a juvenile justice system that is fair, compassionate, and developmentally appropriate—a system that uses community supports, not prison, to help children grow and thrive. We will:



## a. PROMOTE DECARCERATION AND REINVESTMENT IN LOUISIANA'S COMMUNITIES

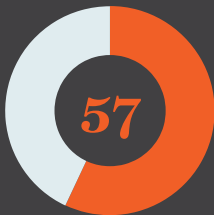
### THE PROBLEM:

Juvenile prison is a failed enterprise. And Louisiana is imprisoning children who could thrive in their own homes and communities, with enormous costs in public dollars and public safety. Imprisoning a youth in juvenile prison costs the state of Louisiana \$424 a day, according to the state's legislative auditor—or \$154,760 for every year that a child spends in prison.

Research shows that when youth become involved in the juvenile justice system for

minor misbehavior, they are more likely to engage in continued delinquency in the future. The further a young person penetrates the juvenile justice system, the more likely he or she is to be arrested as an adult. And juvenile prison has been shown to increase recidivism. Public safety depends on a system that takes every opportunity to use alternatives to formal arrest, prosecution, and incarceration.

### KEY STATISTICS:



The percentage of children in Louisiana's juvenile justice facilities who have been sentenced for offenses involving neither violence nor weapons.



The number of new juvenile prison beds currently under construction in Louisiana, despite a 40% decline in serious juvenile arrests since 2005.



Improvement in recidivism rates when serious youthful offenders are incarcerated rather than given access to community-based services, according to the largest longitudinal study of recidivism in the American juvenile justice system.

### **LCCR'S RESPONSE:**

Many states have found a solution to the over-incarceration of children: Reinvestment, which generates a virtuous cycle by putting the savings from decarceration back into community-based services and supports that can keep children out of juvenile custody. LCCR knows that prison doesn't work for children. And we believe in the potential of reinvestment.

#### **We will keep children out of custody and promote community-based services by:**

- i. Building a statewide coalition of justice-system stakeholders and youth-serving organizations to support decarceration and reinvestment as a strategy for making communities safer, conserving public funds, and better caring for our children.
- ii. Collaborating with coalition members to develop and implement a juvenile justice reform blueprint that includes a detailed plan for reinvestment.
- iii. Advocating for oversight and careful planning in determining the appropriate number of juvenile prison beds in Louisiana.
- iv. Supporting efforts to expand the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative across Louisiana, resulting in statewide reductions of unnecessary short-term detention of youth.
- v. Advocating for improved and standardized training for juvenile justice system stakeholders across Louisiana.
- vi. Assembling and regularly updating a data dashboard to educate stakeholders and the public on juvenile justice successes and areas for improvement.
- vii. Crafting and disseminating policymaker education materials to ensure that state and local leadership understand best practices in juvenile justice reform.



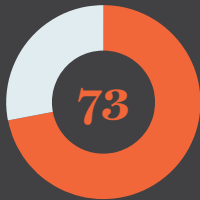
## b. IMPROVED CONDITIONS AND SERVICES FOR CHILDREN IN LOUISIANA'S JUVENILE JUSTICE FACILITIES

### THE PROBLEM:

When children fall into the deep end of the juvenile justice system, we need to take care of them. If we fail to give them the supports that they need to develop in positive ways, we are betraying them and putting our future at risk. Yet too often Louisiana children in custody are not kept safe and do not receive quality education and mental health care.

And when they come home, they don't always receive the reentry supports that research has shown lead to a successful transition home from juvenile justice facilities. In fact, LCCR estimates that 65% of Louisiana children leave custody without any parole supports in place at all.

### KEY STATISTICS:



The percentage of children in Louisiana's juvenile justice facilities who suffer from a mental disorder.

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The percentage of children in the custody of the Louisiana juvenile justice system who earn high school credits, compared with 36% across the South and 46% nationally, according to the Southern Education Foundation.



The percentage of children who finish high school within four years after incarceration, according to the Justice Policy Institute.

### LCCR'S RESPONSE:

**We will make sure Louisiana's juvenile justice facilities protect the rights and meet the developmental needs of young people by:**

- i. Advocating for improved educational services in Louisiana's juvenile prisons and group homes.
- ii. Investigating and publicizing concerns about conditions of confinement in Louisiana's short-term juvenile detention centers and group homes, and advocating for enhanced accountability and compliance with quality standards in those facilities.
- iii. Continuing to monitor and respond to conditions of confinement concerns in Louisiana's juvenile prisons.



## C. CHILDREN OUT OF THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM

### THE PROBLEM:

The criminal justice system is no place for children. National research has documented the difficulty of keeping children safe in adult jails, where they are at high risk of suicide, and assault, and are far less likely to receive the developmental supports they need. Because jails are required to house youth separately from adult inmates, they often place children in conditions similar to solitary confinement – kept on lock down

for 23 hours a day, without any contact with other prisoners and very little meaningful contact with staff. And, because they have so frequently been brutalized and traumatized, children held in adult custody are more likely to recidivate. In other words, many children who have spent time in adult jails experience irreparable harm and come back to the community more likely to commit crimes.

### KEY STATISTICS:



The percentage of all victims of sexual violence in U.S. adult prisons who are children, despite the fact that children make up only 1% of the inmate population.



The number of states in the U.S. that do not prosecute all 17 year olds as adults. Louisiana is not one of them.



The percentage increase in recidivism that comes with prosecuting youth as adults, according to the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

### LCCR'S RESPONSE:

LCCR believes that children under the age of 18 should never be placed in the criminal justice system. Whatever they are accused of doing, children in the justice system are still children, with all of the developmental needs, all of the limitations, and all of the potential that children everywhere have. **We will work to keep children out of the criminal justice system by:**

- i. Launching a campaign to reduce the number of children under the age of 18 who are prosecuted in the criminal justice system.
- ii. Advocating for children who are prosecuted as adults to be detained prior to trial in juvenile detention centers rather than criminal jails.
- iii. Advocating for high-quality educational options for youth up to age 22 who are held in pretrial criminal custody.





## d. FEWER CHILDREN AND BETTER SERVICES IN NEW ORLEANS' JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

### THE PROBLEM:

We can do better for vulnerable children in one of the country's most violent cities. We can be better coordinated: Our juvenile justice system does not share data well, and there are no consensus quality standards against which we can measure our progress. We can put a renewed emphasis on fairness: A wildly disproportionate number of children arrested in New Orleans are

African-American—a troubling indicator of disproportionate enforcement and unequal opportunity. And we can be smarter about diverting more children away from formal processing: Even as juvenile offending and juvenile arrests have fallen in New Orleans over the past five years, the proportion of juvenile prosecutions is going up.

### KEY STATISTICS:



The percentage decrease in arrests in New Orleans between 2008 and 2013.



The percentage of juvenile arrests in New Orleans for minor offenses of simple battery, drug possession, theft, and disturbing the peace.



The percentage of children arrested in New Orleans in 2014 who were African-American, despite the fact that African-Americans only make up 59% of the city's population.

### LCCR'S RESPONSE:

We will work with partners to build a smaller, smarter juvenile justice system in New Orleans—one that is data-driven, diverts as many youth as possible away from formal processing and prosecution, and serves children in their own homes and communities rather than in prisons and jails. **We will succeed by:**

- i. Building a citywide coalition of stakeholders and youth-serving organizations that are committed to reform.
- ii. Working with the coalition to develop a citywide juvenile justice reform strategic plan with a data dashboard to track implementation and impact.
- iii. Focusing reform efforts on police arrest policies, pre-charging diversion, and reentry from secure detention and juvenile prison.



# Strengthening Our Organization

## 4

**We will build a sustainable, efficient, and effective organization that reflects our values and has the capacity to fulfill our mission and goals. We will:**

### **a. IMPROVED FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY**

**We will promote the long-term financial sustainability of the organization by:**

- i. Diversifying funding sources so that individual giving, corporate support, and earned revenue make up at least 35% of the annual budget.
- ii. Increasing multi-year funding so that 50% of organizational revenues are committed or safely projected at least one year in advance.
- iii. Establishing a reserve fund to maintain at least six months of operating capital in the bank at all times.
- iv. Doubling the number of individual and institutional donors to the organization.

## **b. INVESTMENT IN STAFF**

**We will support our staff in pursuing careers in public defense and youth advocacy by:**

- i. Improving policies and practices focused on the recruitment, hiring, professional development, and retention of a highly-talented and diverse staff.
- ii. Strengthening performance management structures and practices for all staff, including expectation setting, job descriptions, work plans, evaluations, and supervision.
- iii. Creating succession plans for key organizational staff.
- iv. Adding additional staff with expertise in communications and policy analysis.

## **c. DATA COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND DISSEMINATION**

We will leverage our unique position as the juvenile defender in Orleans Parish to collect, analyze, and disseminate data on what is working and what is not working for children in the justice system. **We will use data to improve outcomes for children by:**

- i. Developing juvenile justice dashboards to track progress towards reform in New Orleans and across Louisiana.
- ii. Continuing to pioneer the use of data to quantify the positive effect of holistic juvenile defense advocacy on legal and life outcomes for youth, and to measure differential outcomes for particularly vulnerable subsets of children—like LGBTQ youth and youth of color.
- iii. Building and implementing a specialized case management system to make our direct services more efficient and to maximize communication among defense team members.

## **d. ENHANCED ORGANIZATIONAL LEADERSHIP**

**We will enhance the leadership capacity of our organization to realize the goals outlined in this plan by:**

- i. Establishing and supporting a staff leadership team to manage the daily operations of the organization.
- ii. Developing our board to increase its ability to sustain itself, provide ambassadorial leadership, raise money, and fulfill its governance responsibilities.



## **e. STRONG PARTNERSHIPS**

**We will continue to expand and improve our partnerships to accomplish the goals of the organization and the children it serves by:**

- i. Continuing to formalize partnerships with service providers who work with our clients in New Orleans and statewide.
- ii. Developing advocacy coalitions in New Orleans and across Louisiana to design and implement policy reform agendas.
- iii. Establishing structures to ensure the voices of system-involved youth influence organizational decision-making.



# Our Team

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