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# Why Diversion is Not Enough: Building the Case for Extended Diversion

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Black youth are the **most disproportionately** represented group in the juvenile justice system.

**Black male youth are**

**5X**

**more likely to be incarcerated than their white youth peers.**

**63%**

**Of Black youth are more likely to be  
committed than white youth.**

**Black women are**

**10X**

**more likely than young white women to be referred to the  
juvenile court system.**

**These statistics are not baseless  
or unsupported claims; they are  
instead stark realities for many  
our youth.**

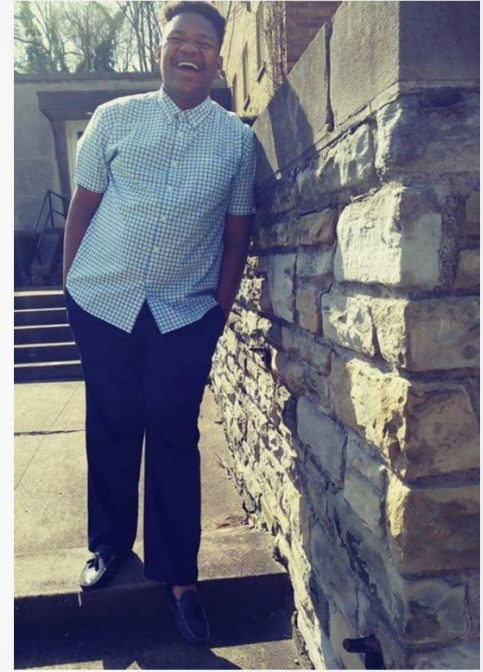
We know these  
numbers by name.



Jayon & Leon Blair



Shawnray Byrd



Jerome McKoy



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# These students...

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- Have made it...thankfully.
- Represent youth who have committed “crimes” as 14 years olds and have engaged in our Diversion and Extended Diversion Programs to deviate from destructive behavior and transition into more productive life paths
- 10 years later, are successfully pursuing post-secondary education, working fulfilling jobs, exploring purposeful careers, parenting children, and leading their communities



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# Through our Diversion Program, we have...

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- Partnered with JPO, court officials, social service agencies for over 24 years
- Served over 3,500 youth through our Diversion and Extended Diversion Programs
- Saved our taxpayers over \$1,000,000 through alternative detention programming
- Reduced youths' further persistence in the juvenile justice system
- Created alternative means to support youth with offenses
- Redirected the paths of young people toward productive employment, education, and career opportunities



As we narrow in on our impact, let's  
first look at our historical data.

# Data Snapshot

## Racial Demographics

70% Black

10% White

3% Hispanic

12% Mixed-Race

5% Other

## Gender Demographics

87% Male Clients

13% Female Clients

## School Demographics

40% PPS

10% Public Charter Schools

25% Surrounding Public Schools

12% Alternative Public Schools

8% Private Schools

5% Unknown

## Location Demographics

54% City Residents

46% County Residents

A majority of youth were Black and male-identifying

A majority of youth were City residents attending Pittsburgh Public Schools

n= 107 youth; 2012-2015

# Data Snapshot

Number of Charges	Percentage
1	16%
2	33%
3	34%
4	10%
5	7%

A majority of youth served had 3 charges at time of their program referral

Other Demographics	Percentage
Court Attendance	More than 90% attend
Recidivism	Less than 25% re-offend
Truancy	Less than 30% are truant
Program Length	On average 8 months
Service Provision	100% receive SV, HV, CH
Other Program Engagement	80% engage in other YES programming

A majority of youth successfully attend court, do not reoffend or display truant behavior, participate for about 8 months and receive service provision.

n= 107 youth; 2012-2015

Historically, youth have successfully engaged in and completed our programs. Let's see how.

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# Youth Enrichment Services (YES)

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## Mission

To provide socially and economically at-risk youth the opportunity to achieve success through participation in mentorship, education, and enrichment programs.



## Vision

To empower communities to become their own best resource.



## Ethos

Everyone matters – there are no throw-away kids



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# YES' Impact Over 30 years

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- Served **6000 youth ages 10 to 24** through its year-round programming
- YES prides itself on **providing youth of color opportunities** to explore, challenge, and rewrite the limiting and harmful narratives they have been given by society
- YES prioritizes serving youth on the margin and **directly confronts the social, economic, and academic injustices and disparities** that overwhelmingly affect them
- YES has 30 years of experience **co-creating and implementing** youth engagement programs, services, and strategies for change alongside youth, their families, and critical stakeholders



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# YES Programming

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- Although we offer a host of academic, work force, post-secondary, and violence prevention programming, today's presentation will focus primarily on **YES' Diversion and Restorative Services Programming.**



# Diversion and Restorative Services Programming

## Diversion Prevention Third Iteration (DP3)

Restorative practices programming designed to:

- prevent youth from becoming court or system-involved
- equip youth with the social literacy skills to navigate different contexts

## Diversion 2000 (D2000)

Alternative to detention, pre-adjudication mentoring and monitoring programming designed to:

- dissuade youths' further penetration into the system
- support youth and families as they navigate the justice system
- reduce risk factors associated with criminal behavior and activity

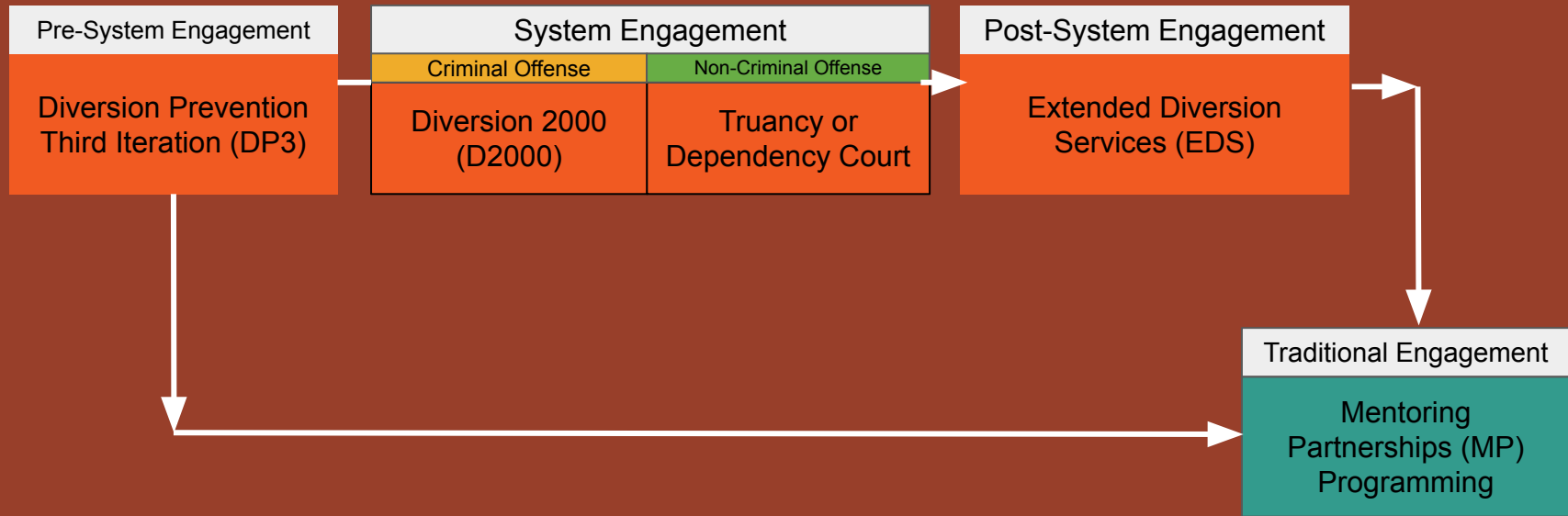
## Extended Diversion Services (EDS)

Transitional and aftercare programming designed to:

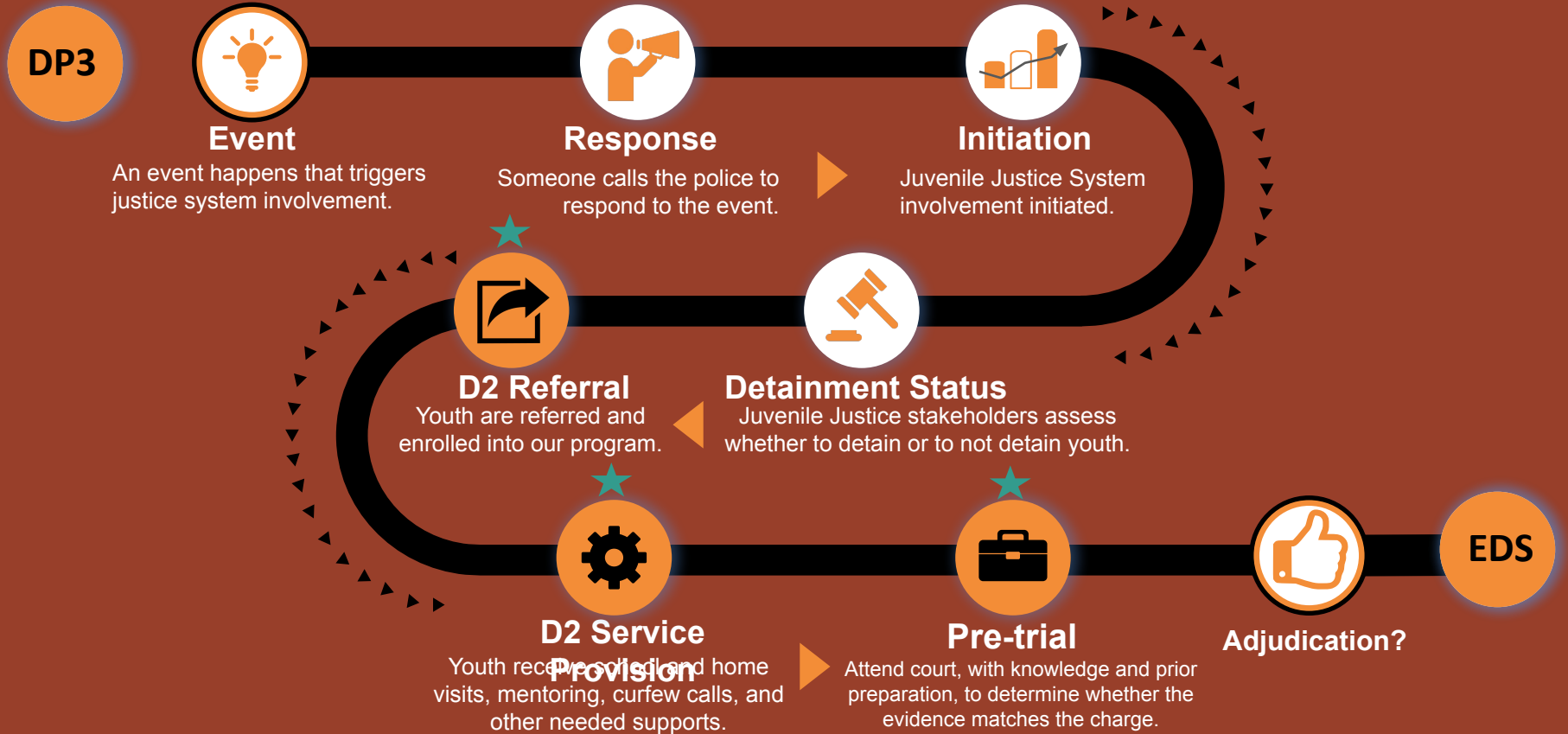
- support youths' personal development through life skills training, cultural enrichment, and pro-social relationship building
- ensure students do not reoffend or repeat infractions with the justice system



# Diversion and Restorative Services Ecosystem



# Pre, During, and Post-System Engagement w/ YES



# Program Severity Level



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# Diversion with YES

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# Diversion 2000 (D2000)

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- Diversion 2000 is a pre-adjudication mentoring and monitoring detention alternative program that was developed in collaboration with, and funded by, the Allegheny County Department of Human Services and Allegheny County Juvenile Probation to address the over-confinement of children ages 10-18.
- Program participants are co-ed youth, vulnerable to societal and delinquency risk factors, struggling with below-par academic achievement, and lacking sufficient support systems to prevent recidivism prior to adjudication.
- YES intervenes in youths' immersion into the justice system to limit the degree of harm.





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# What does YES seek to accomplish with Diversion 2000 youth?

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- Provide pro-social support and personal development to **prevent youth entry or reentry to the juvenile justice system**
- **Lessen** the influence of youth **exposure to an abundance of negative environmental influences** in their immediate community, schools, or household
- Instill in youth the notions of self-worth, initiative and goal attainment through character development



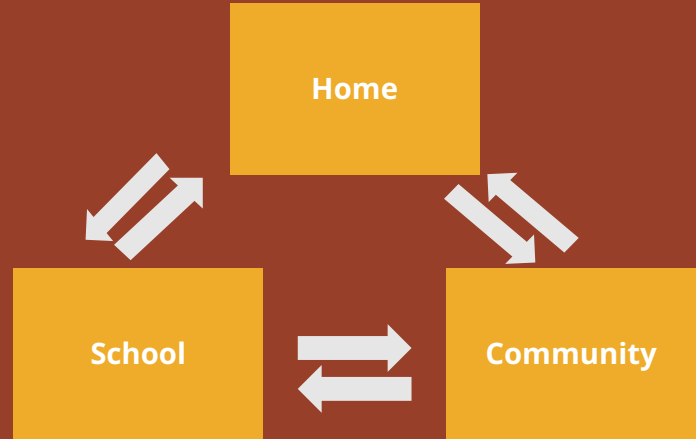
# Diversion 2000 (D2000) Program Goals

<i>Goal Category</i>	<i>Goals</i>
<i>Anti-Recidivism</i>	Decrease youth recidivism rate to 0% over period of time on caseload
<i>Monitoring &amp; Skill Building</i>	Monitor youth behavior in their homes, schools, and communities and teach prosocial behavior skills; ensure curfew compliance if applicable
<i>Truancy Prevention</i>	Ensure youth are not truant and meet school-defined attendance criteria
<i>Court Attendance</i>	Ensure youth do not abscond
<i>Risk Intervention</i>	Decrease school, home, and community risk factors that influence criminogenic behaviors by end of time on caseload
<i>Overall Service Provision</i>	Provide services and interventions that align with youth expected level of service



# Important Developmental Contexts

- YES believe that in order to best serve students **we must understand them** and who they are in a variety of settings and environments.
- As such, YES considers all three contexts when serving youth:
  - Home
  - School
  - Community



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# Service Frequency

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- YES' D2000 program is a 24/7 monitoring and mentoring program, however the frequency of youth service is determined at the point of referral and sometimes altered throughout youths' program involvement
- Risk assessment (YLS) determines level of services for most recommendations
  - Risk Assessment Scores
- Some additional factors include, but are not limited to:
  - Probation recommendations
  - Nature of charges
  - Youth program exit date
  - Parent(s) or guardian(s) and/or youths' work schedule
  - School personnel schedules and/or environment
  - Youth participation in extracurricular activities and other program involvement (i.e. Sports, other afterschool programs, or employment opportunities)



# Diversion 2000 (D2000) Service Levels

Level of Service	
<b>Low Intensity</b>	2 School Visits 2 Home Visits Case Management Family Action Planning Mentoring Wellness Calls Interventions
<b>Medium Intensity</b>	3 School Visits 3 Home Visits Case Management Family Action Planning Additional Mentoring Curfew Calls Interventions
<b>High Intensity</b>	3 School Visits 3 Home Visits Case Management Family Action Planning Additional Mentoring Curfew Calls Interventions Additional Services Outreach (Drug & Alcohol Counseling, Mental Health Services, Conflict Resolution, Family Therapy)



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# Service Terms

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- D2000 youth are active from the time of arrest or detention hearing until they attend their adjudication hearing or until their judge or probation office ends their enrollment.



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# Current Data 2022 - 2024

90 Diversion Clients

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# Overall Service Provision Intensity

A majority of Clients received medium intensity support.

Level of Service			% of Clients
<b>Low Intensity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 2 School Visits</li><li>• 2 Home Visits</li><li>• Case Management</li><li>• Family Action</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Family Action Planning</li><li>• Mentoring</li><li>• Wellness Calls</li><li>• Interventions</li><li>•</li></ul>	<b>22%</b>
<b>Medium Intensity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 3 School Visits</li><li>• 3 Home Visits</li><li>• Case Management</li><li>• Family Action Planning</li><li>•</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Additional Mentoring</li><li>• Curfew Calls</li><li>• Interventions</li></ul>	<b>63%</b>
<b>High Intensity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 3 School Visits</li><li>• 3 Home Visits</li><li>• Case Management</li><li>• Family Action Planning</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Additional Mentoring</li><li>• Curfew Calls</li><li>• Interventions</li><li>• Additional Services Outreach (Drug &amp; Alcohol Counseling, Mental Health Services, Conflict Resolution, Family Therapy)</li></ul>	<b>15%</b>





# By the Numbers: Program Goals

A majority of Clients do not recidivate when receiving YES services.

<i>Goal Category</i>	<i>Goals</i>	<i>Results (2023-2024)</i>
<i>Anti-Recidivism</i>	Decrease youth recidivism rate to 0% over period of time on caseload	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 75% do not recidivate</li></ul>
<i>Monitoring &amp; Skill Building</i>	Monitor youth behavior in home and community and teach prosocial behavior skills; ensure curfew compliance if applicable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Avg. Home visits: 2</li><li>• Avg. School visits: 3</li><li>• Avg. 97% demonstrate prosocial skills</li><li>• Avg. months of monitoring: 3 months</li><li>• Relationship with parents: Mothers (medium); Fathers (low)</li><li>• 85% Curfew Compliance</li></ul>



# By the Numbers: Program Goals

While under YES' Diversion programming, youth attended court hearings, decreased risk factors, and demonstrated low physical aggression, and had positive friend interactions.

Goal Category	Goals	Results (2023-2024)
<i>Truancy Prevention</i>	Ensure youth are not truant and meet school-defined attendance criteria	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Less than half demonstrate truant behavior</li></ul>
<i>Court Attendance</i>	Ensure youth do not abscond	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 98% attended court when applicable</li></ul>
<i>Risk Intervention</i>	Decrease youth risk factors, as outlined by the Youth Level of Service Assessment (YLS), in at least 3 categories by end of time on caseload	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Physical Aggression: 14% had at least 1 month of physical aggression</li><li>• Positive Friends: 98%</li><li>• Youth experience decreased risk factors</li></ul>



# So, what is the verdict on Diversion Programs?



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# Research Says.... Diversion Programs Work

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- With effective mentoring, monitoring, behavioral redemption, and the right prosocial environment, diversion programs:
  - **mitigate cyclical behaviors** in youth and replaces them with positive social and academic habits
  - reduce delinquency and **recidivism**
- Diversion **yields a high cost-benefit to the community** because they cost far less than long-term penetration into the justice system
  - Youth become **responsible and engaged citizens**, but also the community becomes safer and fiscally stronger



# Research Says... Trust and Comprehensive Programming Yields Success

- **Youth caseworkers are an important factor to program effectiveness** (Potter & Kakar, 2002).
- Diversion programs redirect clients away from the justice system and into more fulfilling lives when programs take a **holistic approach** that regards the individual's needs, as well as needs of the family, school, and community
- What happens before and after a young person becomes system-involved is important but not always considered
- **This is the premise that further guides YES' extended diversion programming**



Although Diversion Programs are effective, they are often not enough.



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# Why is Diversion Not Enough?

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# Why Diversion is Not Enough:

Short Term Services Impacts Sustainability & Retention of Positive Development in Youth

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- Most youth are discharged **without an integration plan or a process** for tapering off support services.
- Positive effects of diversion programming are uprooted.
- At-risk youth **do not share the same support systems** as other youth, their development more heavily relies on relationships external to their home environment.





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# Why Diversion is Not Enough:

Absence of long-term positive influences

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- Possible absence of family protective factors and prosocial environments
- Youth facing hardships are often **less trusting and require relationships to be long-term** in order to take their influence seriously (Smith et al. 2015).
- Lack of role models capable of demonstrating higher socioeconomic attainment.



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# Why Diversion is Not Enough:

Dearth of employment opportunities for advancement

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- Timpe and Lunkenheimer (2015): At risk youth experience local **absence of employment opportunities** with significant career ladders
- **Chronically low socioeconomic status** in childhood predicts low education productivity and future income disparities.



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# Why Diversion is Not Enough:

## Exclusionary Policies & Labels

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- **Repetitive negative labels** such as “deviant” or “criminal,” can lead to eventual acceptance based on the assigned category.
- **Exclusionary policies** against criminally charged youth, can impact relationships in school, community, and future employment.
- In contrast, Noyori-Corbett and Moon (2013) found that youth display fewer violent and criminal behaviors when they have **support system** comprising education, mental health, and counseling professionals.



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# Other Program Models

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# Extended Diversion Services (EDS)

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- Extended Diversion Services (EDS) is an aftercare program that extends D2000 mentoring and monitoring like services to young people previously system-involved.
- EDS offers youth who are encountering social, academic, and behavioral hardship with holistic, integrative, mentorship-based support as a deterrent to further justice system involvement.
- EDS is designed to nurture youths' personal development through life skills training, cultural enrichment, relationship building and to connect youth to a welcoming and supportive community committed to their growth.



# Extended Diversion Services (EDS) Program Goals

<b>Goal Category</b>	<b>Goals</b>
<i>Anti-Recidivism</i>	Decrease youth recidivism rate to 0% over period of time on caseload
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<i>Truancy Prevention</i>	Ensure youth are not truant and meet school-defined attendance criteria
<i>Risk Intervention</i>	Decrease school, home, and community risk factors that influence criminogenic behaviors by end of time on caseload
<i>OST Enrichment</i>	Enrich youths' out of school time with extracurricular activities, employment opportunities, or other YES programming
<i>Family Engagement</i>	Engage all members of youths' families by identifying needs and connecting them to resources and program opportunities
<i>Academic Performance</i>	Improve youths' academic performance through in-school academic support coordination and out of school tutoring
<i>Overall Service Provision</i>	Provide services and interventions that align with youth expected level of service



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# Extended Diversion Services (EDS) Services

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Home Visits

Individual  
Mentoring

School Visits

Curfew/ Wellness  
Calls

Community  
Monitoring

Service & Resource  
Coordination

Family Engagement

Skill Building

OST Enrichment

Academic Support



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# Diversion Prevention Third Iteration (DP3)

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- Diversion Prevention Third Iteration (DP3) is a Restorative Practices program designed to prevent youth from becoming involved in the juvenile court system.
- DP3 supports diverse learners through an exploratory, constructivist curriculum to support youths' developmental needs and to build their social literacies to navigate in unique contexts such as personal, public, professional, and academic spaces





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# Diversion Prevention Third Iteration (DP3) Program Goals

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<i>Goal Category</i>	<i>Goals</i>
<i>Emotion Management</i>	Prepare youth to manage their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in a given context (place or person)
<i>Trigger Awareness</i>	Identify and control the spaces, events, and people that cause personal emotional triggers
<i>Self-Regulation</i>	Self-regulate behaviors in various environments
<i>Thinking Errors</i>	Identify thinking errors in real time personal responses across different spaces
<i>Pro-Social Awareness</i>	Increase student convention and commitment to replace non-prosocial behavior with prosocial behavior



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# Diversion Prevention Third Iteration (DP3) Services

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Home Visits

Individual  
Mentoring

School Visits

Service & Resource  
Coordination

Program Sessions

Skill Building

Other YES  
Programs



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# Workshop

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# Extended Diversion Services (EDS) Model

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*The goal of EDS is to continue to provide additional support for youth who are encountering social, academic, and behavioral hardship with mentorship-based support as a deterrent to further justice system involvement*

1. In what ways should support differ for EDS youth, versus D2000 or YES' General Mentorship program? What additional services could be combined with YES' model to provide quality support?
2. What guidelines should be used to determine when a client is ready to transition from EDS to General Mentorship programming?
3. How can we address the inherent barriers that youth in the justice system face in terms of employment opportunities?



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# Thank You

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# What are Diversion Programs?

- **Alternatives to detention** designed to redirect youthful offenders from the justice system through programming, supervision, and supports. These programs aim to:
  - **correct the specific behaviors** that lead to arrest
  - **reduce harmful effects** of prolonged contact with the juvenile justice system
- Diversion programs commonly include rehabilitation, mentoring, and other resource sharing to prevent additional criminal offenses



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# Juvenile Justice System Climate

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- Despite significant decreases since the 1990s, the U.S. still has the **highest rate** of youth confinement of any developed country in the world
- Nearly **one million** youth are involved in the court system per year
- At both local and national levels, Black youth are **disproportionately** represented in the juvenile justice system



# 75% decline in overall youth incarceration between 2020 and 2022 except for....

- Black male youth. They are **4.7 times more likely** to be placed in juvenile facilities than their white peers.
- White youth are **31% more likely** to have cases diverted
- **63%** of black youth are more likely to be committed than white youth





PA placement rate for detained & committed youth per 100,000 youth is higher than the US total.

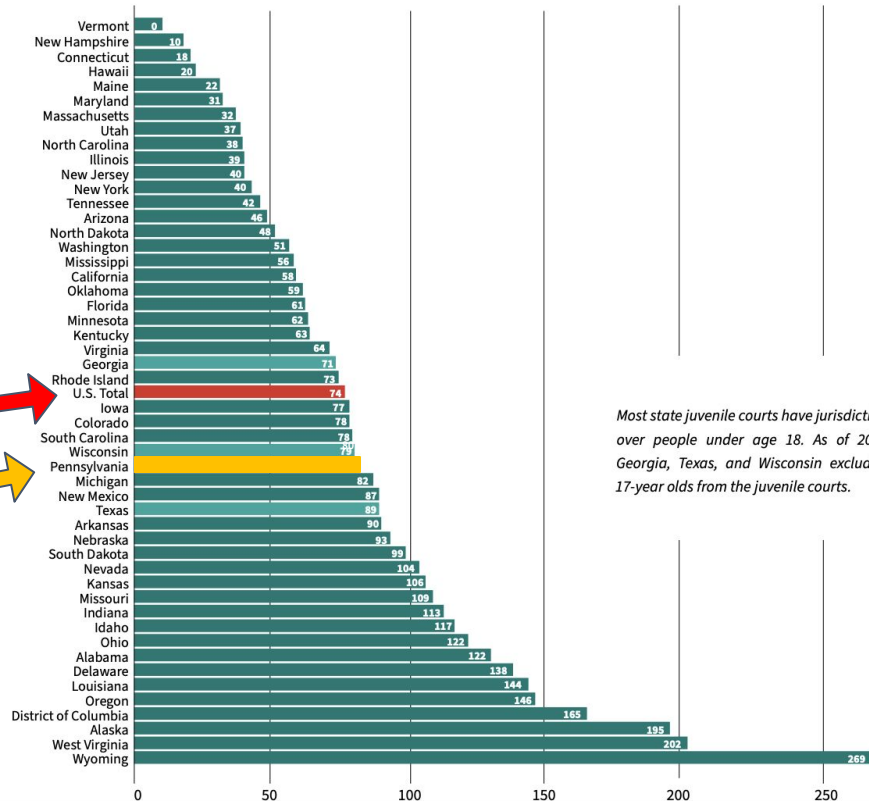
. US: 74

. PA: 80

Figure 4. Youth Residential Placement Rate By State (2021)

Placement rate for detained and committed youth per 100,000 youth<sup>2</sup>

For the purposes of this graph, youth are defined as age 10 through the maximum age of court jurisdiction in that state.



Most state juvenile courts have jurisdiction over people under age 18. As of 2021, Georgia, Texas, and Wisconsin excluded 17-year olds from the juvenile courts.



# Agenda

01

**Introduction  
to YES**

02

**Problem  
Context**

03

**Diversion Programs**

04

**YES' Diversion  
Programs**

05

**Why Diversion  
is Not Enough**

06

**Workshop**



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# Problem Context: Juvenile Justice System Climate

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# Consequences of Juvenile Justice System Engagement

- Youths' engagement in juvenile justice systems has been shown to lead to:
  - **incarceration** as adults
  - **denied employment** because of years-old records
  - **eviction** from homes if properties dismiss for juvenile delinquency
  - continued cycles of **poverty**
  - **feelings of hopelessness** and inability to see the future
  - heightened **mental health issues**



# How do youth get involved in the justice system in Pittsburgh?

- Youth become involved with the juvenile justice system because they are:
  - accused of committing a delinquent or criminal act
  - cited for committing status offenses
    - actions that are illegal only because of a youth's age—such as truancy, underage drinking, and running away from home
- In the past three decades, **schools** have become a major source of referrals to the juvenile court system — a practice referred to as the school to-prison pipeline
- **Minor disciplinary incidents** usually handled by school administrators and counselors are now frequently referred to law enforcement
- **PPS** police refer Black girls to the juvenile court system **more than any other entity**, and most arrests made by PPS police are for minor offenses that are not safety related (Black Girls Equity Alliance, 2020)





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# What has been done in Pittsburgh?

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- Efforts to defund local and school police have led to less punitive actions against youth and instead have caused:
  - Changes in policies guiding juvenile detention
  - Reimagining of gradual sanctions
  - Opening of the Highland Detention at Shuman Center by Adelphoi Villages (formally Shuman Detention Center)
  - Less school resource officers and more school resources and counselor support
  - Less reliance on formal detention centers and placements and more focus on **community-based diversionary interventions**

