



MICHIGAN CENTER *for* YOUTH JUSTICE



**BUILDING
COMMUNITY
FOR CHANGE**

MAY 5, 2022
MIYOUTHJUSTICE.ORG

We Look Forward to Seeing You on May 5th!

We are thrilled to have Ronald Simpson-Bey, one of our long-time MCYJ board members, as our master of ceremonies at this year's Gala! Ronald is the executive vice president for JustLeadershipUSA and a prominent leader of de-carceration across the U.S. who is deeply committed to cutting the number of people under correctional supervision in half by 2030. He also does policy advocacy for the Michigan Collaborative to End Mass Incarceration (MI-CEMI) and organizes returning citizens for Nation Outside. He is a co-founder and advisory board member of Detroit's Chance For Life (CFL) organization. As an engaged, thoughtful, creative leader, Ronald served 27 years in the Michigan prison system, founding many enrichment programs rooted in transformation, redemption, and self-accountability. He attended Eastern Michigan University, Mott Community College, and Jackson Community College and previously worked as a staff paralegal at the former Prison Legal Services of Michigan, Inc.



Our Gala Auction is going live on April 25th!

On Monday, our online auction will be live and ready for your bids. At the appointed time, we will send an email announcement welcoming you to go online to the auction site and review the wide array of wonderful items for bidding, including exciting and exotic travel opportunities, self-care services, fine art pieces, specialty food baskets, and more!

To ensure the health and safety of our guests, speakers, and performers, we will require the following to attend the Gala: (1) proof of Covid-19 vaccination or (2) proof of a negative antigen or PCR test taken in the past 24 hours.

Tickets are selling, so make sure you go to our registration page and get your tickets today! If you cannot attend *Building Community for Change*, we encourage you to purchase tickets for two people who cannot afford the ticket price. We will ensure that the seat goes to a justice-impacted individual or one of our supporters or organizational partners.

[Buy Tickets Here!](#)

Juvenile Justice Taskforce Assessing Statewide System, Developing Recommendations for Reform

The [Michigan Task Force on Juvenile Justice Reform](#), created last year by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer to assess and reform the state's juvenile justice system, is making strides and expects to report its findings and recommendations to the Governor this July.

The statewide system assessment, conducted by the [Council of State Governments \(CSG\) Justice Center](#), included information obtained from listening sessions with justice system-impacted youth and families, interviews with a diverse group of stakeholders, and case-level juvenile justice data analysis.

The task force will use the findings of the statewide assessment to identify and reach a consensus on policy solutions to improve outcomes for youth who are justice-impacted, reduce racial disparities, and increase transparency and accountability within the juvenile justice system.

Lt. Gov. Garland Gilchrist chairs the task force, which comprises state and local justice leaders, individuals who have directly experienced justice-system involvement, and reform advocates, including MCYJ's Executive Director, Jason Smith. The CSG Justice Center is a national nonprofit that uses research-driven strategies to increase public safety and strengthen communities.

On Tuesday, March 22, youth justice reform advocates from five counties across Michigan joined MCYJ staff to meet with state House and Senate Judiciary Committee members to discuss eliminating juvenile court debt and share personal stories. MCYJ Policy Associate Gabrielle Dresner led the meetings, introducing the volunteers in attendance and educating legislators, including House Judiciary Chairman Graham Filler (R) and Vice Chairman David LaGrand (D), on the Debt-Free Justice bill package ([HB 4987-4991](#)).

Although many of the legislators expressed support for the cause of youth justice reform, it will take more meetings and legislator education sessions like this one to enact the necessary legislation to create a fair and effective youth justice system. We want to extend a warm thank you to all youth justice advocates who joined us last month. This work would not be possible without your support!

If you would like to support MCYJ by attending events like this or advocating for change in your community, [sign up to volunteer here!](#)



A Coalition of Advocates Urges Lawmakers to Address School Violence by Supporting Youth

MCYJ, in partnership with Disability Rights Michigan, Michigan's Children, the Michigan League for Public Policy, the American Civil Liberties Union - Michigan, the Student Advocacy Center of Michigan, the Michigan Education Justice Coalition, and Detroit Disability Power, recently sent a letter to the bipartisan [Michigan House Task Force on School Safety](#) urging them to re-evaluate the policies and practices of Michigan schools with regards to safety and consequences.

Often after a tragedy, the focus shifts to prevention in a way that construes typical youthful behavior in an exceptionally harsh light. The statement addresses that while a desire for increased security measures is a natural response to the tragic Oxford school shooting, developing effective, fair responses and addressing the root causes of school violence must remain the priority. The statement can be read in its entirety [here](#). The statement also highlights the use of evidence-based policy and proactive, supportive programming to intervene before concerning behavior turns violent or results in justice-system involvement.

We'd like to thank the Task Force for their continued work and hope to continue this conversation to ensure kids remain safe and focused on education while in school.

Event Highlights the Positive Impact of Restorative Justice

In April, the Dispute Resolution Center and the Friends of Restorative Justice hosted a public education event focused on restorative justice as a transformative alternative to the traditional justice model. The event's guest speaker, Seema Gajwani, who serves as the special counsel for Juvenile Justice Reform and chief of the Restorative Justice Section at the D.C. Office of the Attorney General, shared how she came to embrace restorative justice and provided case examples of how the process yielded positive outcomes for both the youth and the victim, providing clear contrasts with the traditional justice model.

Using her personal experience prosecuting juveniles' crimes and research to support her claims, Seema showed how the restorative justice model could effectively repair harm and aid youth in aging out of illegal behavior by supporting positive shifts in self-identity.

To view the event's recording, click [here](#).



New Berrien County Program a Potential Model for Juvenile Court Diversion

A program to give young people a second chance and avoid formal juvenile court involvement is showing progress early, and Berrien County court officials hope other agencies will adopt the strategy.

The Juvenile Pre-Arrest Diversion Program (JPADP) allows for early intervention by having law enforcement agencies refer youth to appropriate programs rather than sending petitions to the prosecutor's office.

"Youth are diverted to an appropriate program, so this is never on their record if they do well," explained Jean Lawrence, an intake manager and juvenile register for the Berrien County Trial Court Juvenile Division in southwestern Michigan.

The early interventions – based on a referral by law enforcement and after an assessment gauging the youth's needs – ranging from family counseling to academic monitoring. The program is done in partnership with Family Empowerment Services, and youth must have a parent's consent. Eligible individuals are youths under age 18 with misdemeanor offenses who are not on probation.

"We have about ten community agencies we are working with to provide services for the youth involved in the ... program," said Sarah Frey, the pre-arrest diversion manager for Family Empowerment Services. "These agencies offer mental health counseling, addiction counseling, social activities (and) school, and job assistance."

While Berrien County has been an innovator in alternatives to detention, "this is the first one that's completely outside the courthouse altogether," noted Lawrence. The program grew out of discussions between the legal

community and social service agencies during a youth justice forum held in 2020.

“Research shows that the less intrusive the juvenile justice system is with low-risk kids, the better the outcome,” Lawrence said.

[Click here to read the full article.](#)

Youth Justice in The News

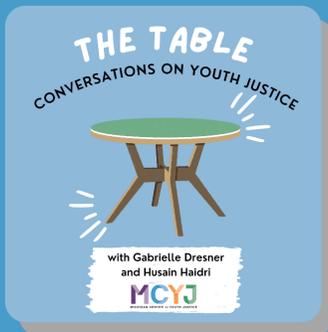
- [Young Professionals program gets \\$4 million investment from state for career, educational opportunities](#)
- [MDHHS Issues Request for Proposals for Juvenile Justice, Ethnic Disparities Reduction](#)
- [High expulsion and suspension rates leave lasting scars on Michigan’s homeless students](#)
- [Leaders in Kalamazoo work toward solutions to address systemic racism in the youth justice system](#)

Young and Locked Up for Life

In this month's episode of *The Table*, Gabi and Husain discuss juvenile life without parole or JLWOP. JLWOP is a sentence of life imprisonment imposed on youth, essentially deeming them unfit to ever return to society. MCYJ does not believe in this sentence or its reasoning, and this episode highlights why. Listen to hear how childhood upbringing, societal impacts, and brain development all play into criminal activity, how the United States Supreme Court worked its way through the cases of six individuals, deciding at nearly every turn that JLWOP constitutes cruel and unusual punishment, and how this sentence can still be used today.

To hear the full episode, click [here](#).

Ep 4 - Supreme Court Cases that made Juvenile Life Without Parole



Upcoming Events

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP):

Exploring Efforts to Provide Coordinated Reentry Services to Youth

This session will focus on localized efforts to support youth returning to their communities with gang involvement, reintegration in school, employment, and housing issues. In addition, grantees will share strategies for adapting service approaches, expanding pilot projects, establishing partnerships, and sustaining demonstration projects.

April 25th - 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Register [here!](#)

Raising the Bar on Juvenile Reentry: What Young People Say They Need

Young people provide invaluable insight into reentry. A panel of youths who have been there will discuss their experiences and how juvenile justice agencies can better help them with reentry. This panel will be moderated by Kim Godfrey Lovett, executive director of Performance-based Standards (PbS), and Melissa Sickmund, the National Center for Juvenile Justice (NCJJ) director.

April 26th - 3 to 4:15 p.m. Information and registration [here!](#)

Coalition for Juvenile Justice:

Restorative Practices to Address School-Based Behaviors

Learn about positive, evidence-based practices that focus on developing and strengthening relationships and a sense of community, promoting repair of those relationships when harm is done. Restorative practices aim to shift disciplinary practices away from punitive approaches (punishing) and more toward helping repair the harm done to people. Provided international Institute for Restorative Practices, this method promotes empathy, inclusiveness, relationship-building, and problem-solving. Restorative methods such as circles and restorative conferences bring victims, offenders, and their supporters together to address wrongdoing and repair harm caused to relationships. Participants will learn an overview of the RP foundation, social discipline windows, continuum of RP, and practical everyday interactions with youth.

May 4th - 3 to 4 p.m. Learn more [here!](#)

Ruth Ellis Center, in collaboration with Social Current:

Inclusive Data Collection: How to Ask About SOGIE In Systems of Care

Increasingly, federal and state systems of care require SOGIE data collection, and many agencies are not prepared. Additionally, the absence of SOGIE visibility can be a barrier for referrals to agencies equipped to serve LGBTQ+ people. This training focuses on how LGBTQ+ identity can impact the way people prioritize voice and choice in service delivery. Participants are introduced to examples of SOGIE data collection and the process of asking about SOGIE with a person-centered and trauma-informed approach. This training is especially relevant to people facilitating intake, assessment, data management, quality assurance, and administrators who support practice and policy change.

May 24th - 1 to 4 p.m. Learn more [here!](#)

Family Support With LGBTQ Children

This training introduces participants to the Family Acceptance Project's research, highlighting the correlation between caregiver behaviors toward LGBTQ+ youth and future health and safety outcomes. Additionally, participants will learn about family preservation and the Ruth Ellis Center's approach to working with families of LGBTQ+ youth.

May 25th- 1 to 4 p.m. Information and registration [here!](#)

Gender Affirming Care

This training provides an overview of gender-affirming care and transitioning (socially, medically, and legally). These practices increase safety, access to resources, and mental/emotional well-being for gender-diverse people. Whether a medical professional or someone interested in advocating for the LGBTQ+ community, participants will leave with concrete behaviors that can be implemented in various roles when serving individuals with diverse gender identities and expressions.

May 26th - 1 to 4 p.m. Register [here!](#)

Michigan Center for Youth Justice:

Spring Gala: Building Community for Change

Please join us in May for our spring fundraising Gala! This in-person event will be at Weber's Boutique Hotel and Restaurant in Ann Arbor, MI.

May 5th - 6 to 9 p.m. Purchase tickets [here!](#)

Our Vision is a fair and effective justice system for Michigan's children, youth and young adults.

Our Mission is to advance policies and practices that reduce confinement and support trauma-informed, racially equitable, socio-economically and culturally responsive, community-based solutions for Michigan's justice-involved children, youth and young adults.

Please consider supporting our work by donating today.

[Donate](#)

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