

NATIONAL JUVENILE JUSTICE NETWORK

COMMUNICATIONS TIP SHEET

FIVE WAYS TO USE *ADVANCES*

Over the past decade and more, advocates working to transform the youth legal system have made a remarkable amount of progress in changing laws throughout the country to improve the lives of our youth and families including legislation focused on reducing racial disparities, reducing legal system involvement and confinement, and keeping youth out of the adult system. You only need to flip through the National Juvenile Justice Network's annual *Advances* publication to see our members many accomplishments in the face of much adversity. While there is much more work to be done, *Advances* is a tool that can help you with your work.

***Advances* can help you:**

1. **Connect with NJJN members and other allies.**

You may not realize how many different people and organizations are working on your issue nationwide. Use [NJJN's membership directory](#) to reach out and forge new alliances. Email us at info@njjn.org if you need help connecting with someone.

2. **Generate and share ideas.**

Scanning this document may give you ideas about policy changes or strategies you have not tried before. Or, you might see an opportunity to share your own solutions with allies in another state. See an opportunity for an NJJN webinar or toolkit? Email us at info@njjn.org!

3. **Educate legislators and policymakers.**

Policymakers and legislators will appreciate it when you give them information about other communities that have adopted policies or legislation related to their own policy goals. How you do this depends on your relationship with the policymaker and where your work stands, but here are some ideas:

- Use *Advances* as a thank-you, especially if the policymaker in question was influential in making a change recognized in the document. Include a cover note with your own thank-

you, recognizing the important part they played in the reform. If appropriate, you might use your note as a springboard for a new ask—even if it’s just a meeting.

- Your state’s governor should have someone who’s responsible for youth policy; make sure he or she has a copy of *Advances*. Again, this could be just a thank-you, or it might be a way to start a conversation.

4. Educate journalists and other members of the public.

Journalists often want to know if policy proposals have been tried elsewhere—and who they can talk to if they need more information. This document will help you be a credible source of information for them.

- Refer journalists to *Advances* when you’re giving them information about a key issue.
- Send out a press release tying your work to national trends, or in conjunction with an event or hearing in your area. We can give you a template—as well as sample tweets and Facebook posts.
- Cite *Advances* in an op-ed—reviewing it may even give you an idea for an editorial.
- Share *Advances* with newspaper editorial boards, public and private funders, and bloggers in your area. Look for opportunities to present your accomplishments to civic groups that focus on public policy.
- Remember to pitch a story, not the issue. You’ll be more likely to interest others if you can tie *Advances* to a larger story (i.e., the state budget crisis, school-to-prison pipeline, racial and ethnic disparities), a story about a young person, or the champion who’s been at the center of your state’s advances.
- Don’t forget academics. Most colleges and universities have individuals who work in fields related to youth justice—some of them could become powerful allies; sharing *Advances* could cement or establish that relationship.

5. Promote youth policy transformation.

Sharing this document with your key audiences will reinforce the importance of the work you do and communicates that you are part of a national movement to change how we handle youth in trouble with the law. Plus, you can use it to show that the issues you focus on are getting national recognition.

- Blog about *Advances*, put it in your e-newsletter, post it on your website, or mention it on your favorite social network. (We’ll give you some sample tweets and Facebook posts you can work with.)
- Think about your key audiences. Is there anyone who would benefit from reviewing *Advances*? Perhaps your local sheriff, the head of juvenile probation, or an influential attorney would appreciate knowing that the reforms you’re proposing have been implemented successfully elsewhere.