NJNN’s Vision of Justice

The United States’ legal system all too often punishes children for normal youthful behavior, pushing countless predominately Black and Brown youth out of homes and schools and into courtrooms where they face incarceration and lifelong consequences of legal system involvement. But it doesn’t have to be this way. We know there are better ways to serve youth, and the National Juvenile Justice Network (NJNN) is committed to bringing that vision to life.

Resource Communities

Betting public safety outcomes for communities requires us to address the root causes that create conditions for crime. In this way, the best thing we can do is fund safe environments. We must fund:
- Safe affordable housing
- Family sustaining jobs
- Physical and mental healthcare
- Police free schools
- Parks and child care centers

Invest in Youth

Just as we must create healthy environments to grow thriving youth, we equally have to listen to youth and create opportunities for learning. This means:
- Locally run engaging youth programming
- Wrap around support services
- Afterschool programs
- Arts and recreation programs
- Employment opportunities

Dismantle Racism

Youth deserve to live out their wildest dreams! Yet Black and Brown youth face barriers posed by implicit bias, race based policies, and decades of systemic oppression. To create a just society, we must:
- Talk openly about race and racism
- Directly challenge policies, practices, and narratives that harm Black and Brown Youth
- Utilize frameworks like Racial Impact Statements to ensure policies positively impact BIPOC youth

Accountability Not Courts

We all make mistakes, particularly during our youth when our brains are quickly developing. But no one should be defined by their worst moment. All youth deserve opportunities to learn how to take accountability and make amends. That is why we should:
- Implement restorative justice circles
- Create healing centered spaces
- Ensure counseling and therapeutic services are available for all youth

Benchmarks

As NJNN works to implement it’s vision for justice, we are focused on the following:
- NJNN is committed to becoming an Anti-Racist organization and Network. More details to come!
- NJNN plans to pursue policies to reduce racial disparities in the system. This includes:
  - Setting a national minimum age of youth prosecution at 14 in line with the United Nation’s International Standard.
  - Eliminating for-profit motives in youth justice
  - Ending the prosecution of youth as adults
  - Closing youth prisons and reducing the use of congregate care for youth
- NJNN will also analyze policies using tools shown to access policies for their racial impacts.