

COALITION FOR JUVENILE JUSTICE

YOUTH MANUAL



YOUTH MEMBER TRAINING MANUAL

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With my heartfelt thanks,

—Nicole Young, CJJ 2004 National Youth Representative

Introduction

It could have been you. Erase a few people from your life. Reverse a couple decisions. A tough break here, a pivotal mistake there—and you are standing in front of a juvenile court judge.

Or maybe it was you. But that life—the confusion, the drama, the old habits—is behind you. Now you are starting over. You have sound goals and a chance to create a positive future.

Either way, you realize you are fortunate. If you have never been in trouble with the law, you owe it to other youth to see that they receive the types of support and guidance you did. If you have come into contact with the juvenile court system, you are indebted to your community and must answer the call to strengthen it.

As a member of the Coalition for Juvenile Justice (CJJ), you can fulfill some of your responsibilities for yourself and the people around you. This manual will explain how. Filled with information that clarifies the mission, structure and operations of CJJ and the juvenile court system, this concise document also highlights myriad service opportunities.

So read on and take action. We have attempted to answer the questions a new CJJ youth member might have and tried to illustrate the scope of our work. We hope you enjoy learning about the organization and that you are inspired to share your talents with us. Welcome to CJJ.

—The National CJJ Youth Committee



About The Coalition for Juvenile Justice (CJJ)

The Coalition for Juvenile Justice (CJJ) is a *national nonprofit association* that builds *safe communities* one child at a time. CJJ comprises 56 governor-appointed advisory groups representing the *U.S. states, territories and District of Columbia*. CJJ is based in Washington, DC, yet has nationwide reach.

More than *1,800 volunteers* from the public and private sectors—professionals, concerned citizens and *advocates for children and families*, representing a broad range of perspectives—serve as CJJ's *state advisory members*. In addition to its state advisory members, CJJ welcomes *individuals* who share our interests and concerns for the *well being of youth and communities* to join as members at large.

CJJ serves as a premier national resource on delinquency prevention and juvenile justice issues. It is the vision of CJJ's more than 1,800 state-based members to build safe communities one child at a time. CJJ provides all of its members and the public with:

- ♦ **News** about grant opportunities, best practices, federal policy matters, research reports and national legal cases in the area of juvenile justice.
- ♦ **Networking opportunities** by staging national and regional conferences across the country that feature effective advocates and experts on juvenile justice issues and programs.
- ♦ **Reform initiatives** to improve how communities and service agencies respond to youth, youth at risk, young offenders and families.
- ♦ **A national voice** through issuing research and advisory reports to the President, the Congress and the States, as well as other educational efforts that draw attention to urgent issues affecting troubled youth, families and communities.

CJJ Youth Members

Roles and Opportunities

As a youth member of your State Advisory Group (SAG) or the Youth Committee, it is your duty to share your **unique insights** and your time to be an active CJJ member.

Like adult CJJ members, the **expectations facing you are high** and the **rewards are fulfilling**.

Your duties can be summarized in three words:

- 1) Educate,
- 2) Advocate and
- 3) Empower.

I) Educate

Inform the Public of Latest Findings and Initiatives

CJJ promotes delinquency prevention and supports the rehabilitative focus of the juvenile court system. Mounting evidence reaffirms CJJ's sensible approach to ensuring community safety. The public, however, needs to become more aware of the types of programs and policies that create safe and healthy youth, families and communities.

To advance the public dialogue, CJJ publishes an annual report to focus the attention of citizens and policymakers. CJJ also holds several regional and national conferences each year, issues a bi-monthly eMonitor, maintains a Website (www.juvjustice.org) and conducts a continuing public awareness campaign. CJJ needs youth members to help deliver its messages to the people.

Help **disseminate CJJ publications** to local school administrators, religious leaders, youth advocates and policymakers.

Speak out and share CJJ's most recent findings and message points with others at conferences, public engagements or through the media.

Write letters urging political representatives, community leaders and journalists to examine CJJ's positions and recommendations regarding the prevention of youth violence and delinquency.

Want to Learn More About Juvenile Justice Issues?

American Bar Association's Juvenile Justice Center
www.abanet.org/crimjust/juvjus

American Youth Policy Forum
www.aypf.org

Building Blocks for Youth
www.buildingblocksforyouth.org

Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice
www.cjcj.org

Child Welfare League of America
www.cwla.org

Children's Defense Fund
www.childrensdefense.org

Coalition for Juvenile Justice
www.juvjustice.org

Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative at the Annie E. Casey Foundation
www.aecf.org/initiatives/jdai

Juvenile Law Center
www.jlc.org

Justice Policy Institute
www.justicepolicy.org

National Center for Juvenile Justice
www.ncjj.org

National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges
www.ncjfcj.org

National Crime Prevention Council
www.ncpc.org

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention,
U.S. Dept. of Justice
www.ojjdp.ncjrs.org

Youth Law Center
www.youthlawcenter.com

Stay Up-to-Date with Fellow CJJ Members

In order for CJJ members to be effective, they must communicate. So, **attend** your SAG meetings, **engage** at CJJ conferences and **participate** on CJJ committees. **Listen**, offer your opinions and **share** what you have learned with other CJJ members.

CJJ and the causes championed by its members are strengthened by debate, questions and introduction of new ideas. Productive exchanges only occur, however, when information flows openly. You have to share news about your SAG with CJJ members outside your state and vice versa. Furthermore, do not hesitate to cultivate working relationships and friendships. Get to know the Youth Committee member representing your region, the National Youth Representative and other CJJ members you find interesting.



Youth and adults at special event

Engage in Leadership and Training

Volunteers fuel CJJ most commonly through their participation on committees. (CJJ committees are further described on page 15.) As a committee member, you can ensure that youth have influence in the organization's planning process.

Committee involvement

As a youth member your ideas, input and leadership are of great value to all committees. Committee participation also provides you with a chance to sharpen and utilize your leadership skills. CJJ committees address a range of administrative, programmatic and policy issues. Administrative committees ensure effective operations, including the finance committee which works closely with the Treasurer, the fund raising committee, and other committees put in place as needed to address strategic planning, membership, nominations, etc. Committees with a programmatic focus include conference-planning committees, the board of editors that takes responsibility for CJJ's reports, and the committees focused on ethnic and cultural diversity and youth. Policy-oriented committees include government relations and the juvenile justice and delinquency prevention forum, which identifies and discusses the emerging issues that underlie CJJ position papers.

CJJ trainings offer another opportunity for you to engage and have input. CJJ regularly conducts several workshops for its members and conference participants including:

SAG orientation training

New and long-standing State Advisory Group (SAG) members have the opportunity as part of all CJJ national conferences to participate in SAG orientation and training. The SAG training covers all of the basics of a SAG's responsibilities and obligations under the federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act and traces the history and current relationship between the SAGs and CJJ. It's always a good time to learn from your fellow SAG members about what they are doing in their states, as well as learning about current national and federal affairs from CJJ leaders and staff.

Board of Directors' meetings

Although you may not be the SAG chair or Chair-designee for your state, you are welcome to attend the CJJ Board of Directors' meetings that are held twice a year. Here you will see SAG governance of the organization in action. By attending you will become more knowledgeable about the overall business of the organization, and get a front-row view of elections, votes on important issues, and other national decisions made by the organization.

Hill Day Training

Each spring, as part of CJJ's national conference held in the nation's capitol in Washington, DC, you may participate in visit to your members of Congress on "the Hill." Hill day training is also offered at the conference to prepare you for your role in educating members of Congress about juvenile justice issues and concerns in your state. The training is nonpartisan and focused on the needs and interests of children, youth and families in the juvenile court system.

You should, of course, attend these educational sessions. In time, you should also consider volunteering to lead them. Contact the CJJ staff when you are up to the challenge.

2) Advocate

Champion the Spirit of Youth

CJJ's annual Spirit of Youth Award recognizes both the tremendous potential of youth and the rehabilitative focus of the juvenile court system. **Spirit of Youth Award** recipients have made mistakes that brought them into contact with the juvenile court system. Yet, through appropriate services and their individual efforts, these young adults are now improving the lives of children, families and communities.

The Youth Committee with the help of every CJJ youth member promotes the **Spirit of Youth Award** and recruits strong nominees. Raising awareness about the award and its recipients demonstrates to the public that the juvenile court system can work, and that all troubled children and youth deserve a positive chance to change for the better.

As a youth member, you should work to identify candidates for the national **Spirit of Youth Award** during the nomination season between the CJJ Spring Conference and the CJJ Fall Conference, when the award is given. In addition, you can encourage your SAG to establish a state **Spirit of Youth Award**. Present the country and your community with examples of how youth can rebuild their lives if given a chance.

Build Authentic Youth - Adult Partnerships

Engage in your SAG, CJJ committee and at conferences with confidence. Resist any efforts, unintentional or otherwise, to minimize your role or contributions. If child development and public safety are to improve, youth have to be included and treated as equal partners.

Fortunately, the groundwork to welcome you is already in place. Think in terms of developing strong working partnerships with adults. When you attend SAG meetings, conference sessions and any time you participate with adults, seek out adults who are helpful and cooperative. Share your thoughts and ideas. Listen to feedback, and incorporate the wisdom of experience offered to you.

As a youth member, it is important for you to view yourself as a full-fledged member of CJJ. To have impact, you must be present for important discussions and when important decisions are being made, follow through with commitments and responsibilities and stay apprised of issues and facts so that you will have meaningful input. You must also expect and seek out ways to work in cooperation and partnership with adult members, as well as with youth members.

The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP Act) states that each SAG is to have youth members. (The JJDP Act is explained on page II.) CJJ pledges its dedication to operate with youth involvement. Hold these groups and similar organizations to their commitments.

3) Empower

Mobilize Youth

Sometimes policy makers, organizations and juvenile justice professionals need to be reminded how strongly youth feel about child development and public safety issues. They also need to hear from you about the latest facts, issues and concerns.

Through sharing facts and information, offering testimonials, and Hill Day visits, young people can make their voices heard.

As a CJJ youth member, you are bound to be called upon to participate in these efforts and perhaps to organize them. *Rise to the occasion!*

Keep youth in your community informed as to the initiatives, laws and changes shaping their lives. Educate them about the possible ramifications of unfolding events. Reach out to children, youth and families who are involved in the juvenile court system and learn how you can advocate for positive changes, together. Encourage the young people around you to make their opinions known.

Reach Out to Other National Youth Organizations

CJJ and other youth-serving organizations have many shared goals on which partnerships are built. These partnerships often lead to cross promotion of important initiatives and conferences. They can also give youth members a chance to serve in a various roles and capacities within new groups and organizations. Youth members that already belong to organizations outside of CJJ can provide an avenue to begin communication and explore the possibility of partnerships.

Youth development, youth advocacy and youth governance organizations to explore include the following, among others:

At the Table:
www.atthetable.org

Center for Youth as Resources:
www.cyar.org

Forum for Youth Investment:
www.forumforyouthinvestment.org

National Indian Youth Leadership Project:
www.niylp.org

National Network for Youth:
www.nn4youth.org

Prudential Youth Leadership Institute:
www.pyli.org

Youth Service America:
www.ysa.org

CJJ Ins and Outs

There are a few relationships, leadership positions and a specific Act of Congress you should know.

CJJ Board of Directors:

Governing body of CJJ policies, strategies and activities. The board of directors comprises State Advisory Group (SAG) Chairs (or Chair-designees) and meets twice a year.

CJJ National Chair:

Presides at CJJ Board of Directors' meetings and National Steering Committee meetings. Elected to a one-year term at the Fall Board of Directors' Meeting, the National Chair represents CJJ publicly, makes committee appointments and sets the organization's agenda.

The JJDP Act of 2002:

CJJ is grounded in the JJDP Act, a bipartisan federal legislative achievement. Since 1974, the federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act has maintained a structure for local citizen involvement—including youth involvement—in the development and implementation of policies and programs for delinquency prevention, and the overall care and custody of adjudicated children and youth. The Act, reauthorized with bipartisan support in 2002, requires the involvement of state advisory groups, appointed by Governors or chief executives in all U.S. states, territories and the District of Columbia. The state juvenile justice advisory groups (SAGs) comprise voluntary representatives from multiple child-serving professions and agencies, blending the public and private sectors. Youth are required members, preferably youth who have had system contact.

In addition, the federal Act provides basic protections for children and youth and calls for a coordinated, cross-agency response to the care and custody of court-involved children, youth and families:

- ◆ Status offenders, or youth whose acts are viewed as crime because of their minor status—like truants, or runaways—must be served close to home, in their communities and outside of jails, whenever possible.
- ◆ When it becomes necessary to detain children in adult jails, they should have no sight or sound contact with adult inmates and should not be held in adult lock-ups for more than six days.
- ◆ All young people should receive fair and equal treatment, regardless of race and social standing. Current data show that minority youth are punished more severely than white youth for the same crimes.

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP):

The federal agency within the United States Department of Justice charged with examining and reducing youth crime and delinquency. OJJDP designs, promotes and supports myriad programs, trainings and publications. OJJDP also conducts technical assistance seminars.

OJJDP provides financial assistance to CJJ and to the SAGs.

Regional Coalitions: CJJ has four regional coalitions:

- 1) **Northeast:**
Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington, DC.
- 2) **Midwest:**
Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin.
- 3) **South:**
Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia.
- 4) **West:**
Alaska, American Samoa, Arizona, California, Colorado, Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Kansas, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, Utah, Washington, Wyoming.

Regional coalitions hold meetings and host annual regional conferences. Each region has a representative elected to serve on the **National Steering Committee.**

The National Youth Committee:

1) Purpose and Responsibilities

Public safety, child development and juvenile delinquency affect youth. Yet young leaders and activists are too often not a part of critical discussions and policy debates about these issues. To offer young people an opportunity to address these issues and contribute to building safer communities, CJJ formed the National Youth Committee.



National Youth Representative presenting the Spirit of Youth Award

The Youth Committee is a standing CJJ committee with nationally and regionally elected and appointed members. In addition to working with other CJJ leaders to shape the organization's agenda, the committee is charged with a number of responsibilities:

- ◆ The Youth Committee oversees the annual coordination and promotion of the Spirit of Youth Award.
- ◆ The Youth Committee hosts educational and social events for youth members and participants at national CJJ conferences.
- ◆ The Youth Committee submits articles to the [CJJ eMonitor](#) (electronic newsletter).
- ◆ The Youth Committee represents CJJ in partnerships with other youth advocacy groups, like the National Youth Network.
- ◆ The Youth Committee participates in Hill Day visits and other public education initiatives.
- ◆ The Youth Committee orients youth members to prepare them to participate fully in CJJ.



The National Youth Committee:

2) Elections and Appointments

The Youth Committee consists of the following:

- a National Youth Representative (Chair);
- four Regional Representatives (one from each region);
- a non-youth/adult member; and
- a CJJ staff liaison.

The CJJ Board of Directors elects the [National Youth Representative](#) at the Fall Board of Directors' meeting. The National Youth Representative serves a [two-year term](#), is chair of the Youth Committee and holds a seat on the National Steering Committee.

[Regional Youth Representatives](#) are elected or appointed by their region, serve a [one-year term](#) and may be reappointed until the age of twenty-five.

The CJJ National Chair appoints the non-youth member. The CJJ Executive Director appoints a staff member to assist the Youth Committee.



Youth Committee members

CJJ Committees at a Glance

In addition to the CJJ Board of Directors, CJJ has several Standing and Ad hoc Committees that direct the organization's attention, resources and energies.

1. **Administration Committee:**
Reviews CJJ bylaws and presents proposed amendments to the CJJ Board of Directors.
(Ad Hoc Committee)
2. **Board of Editors:**
Guides and edits the CJJ Annual Report for presentation to the CJJ Board of Directors.
(Ad hoc Committee)
3. **Conference Planning Committee:**
Develops programming and coordinates planning of the CJJ Annual Spring Conference.
(Standing Committee)
4. **Ethnic and Cultural Diversity Committee:**
Ensures that CJJ addresses racial inequality in the juvenile court system and stays mindful of other pressing issues of race, ethnicity and culture.
(Standing Committee)
5. **Fall Conference Planning Committee:**
Develops programming and coordinates planning of the CJJ Annual Fall Conference.
(Ad hoc Committee)
6. **Finance Committee:**
Reviews the budget and acts as financial advisor to the CJJ Board of Directors.
(Standing Committee)
7. **Government Relations Committee:**
Monitors and reports on JJDP Act reauthorization, appropriation procedures and other legislative matters affecting CJJ and SAGs.
(Ad hoc Committee)
8. **Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Forum:**
Identifies current and emerging issues affecting youth, families and communities, and gathers information from which CJJ philosophies, positions, and recommendations are developed.
(Ad hoc Committee)
9. **Fundraising Committee:**
Supports CJJ fundraising efforts as a healthy and necessary way to further develop the organization by strengthening and diversifying its base of support.
(Ad hoc Committee)
10. **Nominating Committee:**
Recruits, screens and nominates candidates for CJJ leadership and committee positions.
(Standing Committee)
11. **National Steering Committee:**
Serves as the CJJ Executive Committee and conducts organizational business between CJJ Board of Directors' meetings.
(Standing Committee)
12. **Youth Committee:**
Ensures that youth leadership, advocacy and concerns are represented in CJJ operations.
(Standing Committee)



Glossary of Terms:

Law Enforcement & the Juvenile Court in Brief

To clarify juvenile court system jargon and procedures, the following is a short glossary of relevant terms about young offenders, law enforcement and juvenile courts:

Types of Young Offenders

- 1) **Delinquents:** youth that engage in behavior—shoplifting, trespassing, assault—that if committed by adults would be deemed illegal.
- 2) **Status offenders:** youth who engage in behavior—breaking curfew, running away from home, truancy—which if committed by adults, would not be considered illegal. The age at which a youth's minor status legally ends varies by state.

Police Involvement

Police officers have discretion as to how to respond to delinquent youth and status offenders. The following are among the most common practices:

- 1) **Street corner adjustment:** police officers use verbal persuasion or order youth home in response to the youth's mischievous behavior (e.g. loitering or jumping the subway turn stile). No official complaints are filed with the courts.
- 2) **Station house adjustment:** police officers take a youth behaving disruptively (e.g. fighting or disturbing the peace) to headquarters, where youth are sternly warned by the police to improve their conduct, their names and addresses may be entered into the police database and they are released. No official complaints are filed with the courts.
- 3) **Station house adjustment with parental involvement:** police officers take youth behaving disruptively to headquarters, and the youth's names and addresses are entered into the police database. Parents/guardians arrive at headquarters, after the youth are sternly warned by the police to improve their conduct (e.g. avoid illegal activities or bad company). The youth are released once the matter is discussed with parents and the youth. No official complaints are filed with the courts.
- 4) **Police diversion:** police officers bring youth engaging in disruptive behavior to the station house and agree not to file an official complaint with the courts, if the youth meet certain conditions (e.g. attend counseling or perform community service).

Juvenile and Family Court Involvement

Juvenile and family courts intervene when young offenders' actions call for more corrective measures than those previously mentioned. The tools most readily used by the juvenile and family court are as follows:

- 1) **Court in-take unit assessment:** officers of the court or court staff make a preliminary review of young offenders' cases and decide how to channel them. The court in-take units send youth to answer for their actions through court diversion or in juvenile court.
- 2) **Court diversion:** orders youth to make restitution, engage in community service or complete a designated court-sponsored/approved program; usually follows a family-child assessment. One-third to one-half of juvenile cases are addressed in this manner.
- 3) **Juvenile court action:** youth are summoned to appear before a juvenile court judge, who will hold a hearing. If found guilty, young offenders must adhere to a court ordered disposition (sentencing).

Judicial Disposition Options

Juvenile and family court judges, when deciding how to sanction a guilty young offender, have a number of alternatives at their disposal. The most common are:

- 1) **Withhold adjudication:** judges will not enter findings of guilt if young offenders meet certain guidelines (e.g. attend counseling or repay damages) and avoid illegal conduct for a specific period of time, usually six or 12 months.
- 2) **Probation:** young offenders will not be detained in a juvenile facility as long as they meet regularly with a probation officer and live up to the terms of their probation (e.g. avoid illegal conduct, attend school or hold down a job). Probation typically lasts for a year, but can be longer.
- 3) **Probation with special conditions:** requires parents/guardians of a young offender to participate (e.g. in counseling or substance abuse treatment services) as a term of the youth's probation.
- 4) **Out of home placement:** judges send young offenders to a residential program, often located in a remote area. If the youth respond positively to the new environment and structure, they are not committed to a traditional juvenile correctional facility.
- 5) **Correctional placement:** judges sentence youth to serve a year or more in a traditional juvenile correctional facility.

Next Steps

Set a few goals for yourself.

Is there a committee that interests you?

Do you want to take the lead in SAG trainings?

Got ideas on how to promote the Spirit of Youth Award in your state?

Follow your enthusiasm.

Take action to accomplish your goals and engage in CJJ.

Talk to your SAG Chair, a Youth Committee member or CJJ staff, today.



As a youth member, carving out your place can be challenging at times requiring optimism and perseverance. You will have to be assertive and persistent. But remember that all CJJ members start as “beginners,” unsure of themselves and the people around them.

If you feel overwhelmed or need answers, talk to other youth members, fellow SAG members—any CJJ member—or CJJ staff. Chances are that they once had the same feelings or questions.

They will be supportive and happy to help you.

2004 National Steering Committee

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Vicki Blankenship
Alaska
Vice Chair-Chair Elect

John Dewese
South Carolina
Immediate Past Chair

Anne Christensen
Minnesota
Treasurer/Secretary

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Diversity Chair

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Youth Chair

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Minnesota
Midwest Coalition Chair

Paul Lawrence
New Hampshire
Northeast Coalition Chair

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