



**PLATFORM POSITION REGARDING
ADDRESSING RACISM AT THE FRONT END
OF THE YOUTH JUSTICE SYSTEM**

**As adopted by the Coalition for Juvenile Justice
Council of State Advisory Groups**

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CJJ COUNCIL OF THE SAGS

The Coalition for Juvenile Justice is committed to taking a firm stance to boldly addressing racism within the youth justice system. CJJ was one of the first organizations to call attention at the federal level to the need to address disparities that exist within the youth justice system. The Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act now serves as one of the only federal laws that directly require states to address racial and ethnic inequities within their systems.

CJJ is committed to moving to concrete action that will not just address but end these disparities. We are committed to advancing anti-racist work to end the current inequities in our system. We recognize the nationwide, historical compounding of trauma and oppression that contributes to racial and ethnic disparities in the juvenile justice system. While these recommendations don't address all of that, we are starting this work at the front end of the justice system, with a focus on law enforcement and schools, policies and practices, as well as the day-to-day decisions of professionals in these fields, and how they contribute to the ongoing criminalization of Black, Indigenous, Latino and other young people of color, as well as LGBTQA youth and youth with disabilities.



Pastor Edward L. Palmer, Sr., CJJ National Chair

Align federal, state and local budgets based on need in neighborhoods of color to support the dreams and aspirations of young people and their families

I. Ensure autonomy for communities most impacted by racial and ethnic disparities in the justice system, to craft solutions based on strengths and needs of their individual communities.

Whereas, each community and its strengths are different;

Whereas, those in the community are best positioned to know and understand their own unique strengths and needs; and

Whereas, communities of color have been under resourced financially and under funded for youth programs aimed at success and fulfilling a young person's goals and dreams;

We recommend providing increased investment in Title V of the JJDPa to ensure Youth PROMISE Committees are able to hold local planning sessions to assess what is needed in the local community and how to address those needs to better support young people of color and their families. We recommend that these funds can be used for mental health services and diversion at the point of, and prior to, arrest including civil citations, family resource centers, healing programs, mobile crisis units, and truth and reconciliation practices. We further recommend increasing funding for Title II of the JJDPa and expanding eligible uses of funds to include prevention and community-based services.

II. Ensure that service and program providers exhibit culture and linguistic competence/cultural humility.

Whereas, youth of color are overrepresented in the justice system, while service providers and decision makers are disproportionately white;

Whereas, without understanding and training of an individuals' biases and perceptions they will not only not be able to provide effective services, but further perpetuate racism within the justice system; and

Whereas, labels such as "evidence-based" can be costly and time consuming to attain, thus diverting funding from small, community-based providers of color; _

We recommend that requirements for federal grant programs should be reevaluated to include both qualitative and quantitative data matrices in determining whether a program is successful, and prioritize funding for programs that can prove racial bias does not exist in their outcomes. We further recommend ensuring that funding is available for small, community-based providers that are culturally and linguistically competent and high quality, but may not be able to meet the "evidence based" threshold. These funds should also support capacity building for those organizations and/or to hire accountants, grassroots researchers, etc. to meet federal reporting requirements.

III. Commit to supporting youth of color and their families as they seek to heal from current traumas.

Whereas, we recognize that the history of oppression in the United States has resulted in ongoing and systemic disparities that affect Black, Indigenous and Latino communities; and

Whereas, we believe that community healing and restoration are essential and that we must intentionally prioritize addressing disparities and engaging the perspectives of diverse stakeholders can evolve into an inclusive ally with a commitment to equity and will have profound impacts on the broader society;

We recommend ensuring that federal funding can be used for culturally and linguistically competent mental health services, including those that may not be “evidence-based”, for young people and their families; grant funding should be established to provide services to those outside of the youth justice and child welfare systems, and should continue to be available throughout young adulthood; funding from Title II of the JJDPa should be available for this work as it helps address the issue broadly of racial and ethnic disparities within the justice system.

IV. Commit to supporting youth of color and their families as they seek to heal from historical traumas.

Whereas we recognize that the traumas and racism that exist today in our country have been here since our country's founding;

Whereas, we understand and recognize that healing from trauma is essential to eliminating racism from our justice systems; and

Whereas we recognize that this is at the heart of the JJDP's call to address racial and ethnic disparities;

We recommend ensuring that Title II dollars from the JJDP can be used for a broad range of programs focused on addressing racism and racial and ethnic disparities within the justice system, including but not limited to, bringing together communities to conduct conversations focused on healing harms of historical injustices that have happened in the local community.

V. Ensure accountability for those charged with caring for our young people.

Whereas, 442,995 youth were in out of home placements through the child welfare system in 2017;

Whereas research shows that a disproportionate number of youth in the child welfare system are referred to the court system; and

Whereas implicit bias has been shown to cause harsher responses and more frequent calls for law enforcement among youth of color who are in the child welfare system;

We recommend revising qualifications for foster parents to prohibit their advocating for arrest in cases where a young person is being considered for diversion; levying financial penalties against group homes that disproportionately call law enforcement on Black and Brown youth in their care.