New Report Exposes Crisis in Juvenile Justice System and its Devastating Impacts on Families — Solutions Proposed!

By DataCenter On September 10, 2012 · Add Comment

Hot off the press! Justice for Families (J4F) and DataCenter are proud to release a new report on the juvenile justice system. The report, titled “Families Unlocking Futures: Solutions to the Crisis in Juvenile Justice,” offers first of its kind analysis on how the juvenile justice system actually does more to feed the nation’s vast prison system than to deter young people from system involvement. Based on over 1,000 surveys with parents and family members of incarcerated youth and 24 focus groups nationwide, the report presents a body of data never captured or examined before.

Using a participatory model, DataCenter co-led a research process that supported both the leadership development for family members of affected youth and the expansion of J4F’s nationwide network. The report examines the juvenile justice system from the perspectives of those who are most impacted — the involved youth and their families.

This comprehensive study reveals the incredible damage that the system causes to families and communities. It aims to correct misperceptions about system-involved youth. It demonstrates the need for families to redesign the juvenile justice system. The report uncovers crucial flaws that burden, alienate, and exclude families from the treatment of system-involved youth. Here are a few of the report’s findings:

- States spent $5.7 billion locking up 64,558 youth in 2007. That’s $88,000 per year per youth or $240.99 each day.

The report illustrates how declining social services and public education combined with aggressive police tactics, zero-tolerance policies, and the rapid growth of the prison system wreak havoc on low-income communities and communities of color.

But Families Unlocking Futures goes beyond elucidating problems of the juvenile justice system—it puts forth viable, proven solutions and offers a blueprint for Youth Justice Transformation.

For more, check out the Executive Summary (PDF) or Complete Report (PDF).
From research design and data collection to messaging and story-telling, DataCenter supports the community participation process in each of our national research projects. As a result, DataCenter’s approach builds the power of community-based organizations to engage both locally and nationally while generating evidence to back up what they know.

Do you need hard-hitting numbers or stories to give evidence to a reality you already experience? Contact the Research Justice experts here.

This extraordinary report is a must-read for people of conscience, people who know that young people who make mistakes

and struggle in school deserve our care, compassion and concern — not humiliation, prison cells, relentless shame, and all their family supports stripped from them.

— Michelle Alexander, Associate Professor of Law, Ohio State University and Author, The New Jim Crow

This report is a wake-up call to juvenile justice practitioners. Through the words and experiences of relatives of court-involved youth, it poignantly highlights how the system’s policies and practices undermine the ambitions of families to guide and support their children and to make their communities safer.

— Bart Lubow, Director of Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Juvenile Justice Strategy Group

This report provides powerful analysis and insights from voices too often ignored in the formal youth justice system. It rejects the notion that parents are often to blame for youthful misbehaviors and provides specific approaches to involving parents and families in responses that are equitable, restorative and effective.

— James Bell, Founder and Executive Director, W. Haywood Burns Institute

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