

Youth Community Supervision Initiative

Increasing Diversions and Transforming Community Supervision in Maine

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Agenda

Overview

A Minute on Adolescent Brain Development

Let's Talk About Race: Disparities Persist

Transforming Juvenile Probation: Capstone Project

Maine Youth Community Supervision Initiative

Q&A

What is the Youth Community Supervision Initiative (YCSI)?

- The initiative focuses on “what works” when it comes to fostering youth and community safety and well-being.
- It fundamentally reimagines how juvenile community corrections officers (JCCOs) work and with whom they work.
- For young people to thrive, we need to respond more effectively when they make mistakes, even when they cause harm.
- This means moving away from a culture of surveillance and punishment toward more developmentally appropriate responses that lead to longer-term behavior change and accountability, including options that keep more kids away from the justice system.



Maine's Core Leadership Team

Core Team that traveled to Washington, DC to attend the Transforming Juvenile Probation Capstone from June 10-14, 2024:

- Steve Labonte, RCA, Region 3
- Joe Hansen, RCM, Region 1
- Tara Chiasson, JCCO, Region 2
- Betsy Boardman, Judicial Branch
- Tanya Pierson, ADA
- Timothy Gleason, Youth Leader
- Jane Young, Impacted Family
- Doran Wright, Straight Ahead Ministries
- Christopher Northrop, Defense Attorney
- Emma Schwartz, USM, Place Matters
- Jill Ward, MCYP&L



Added post-class:

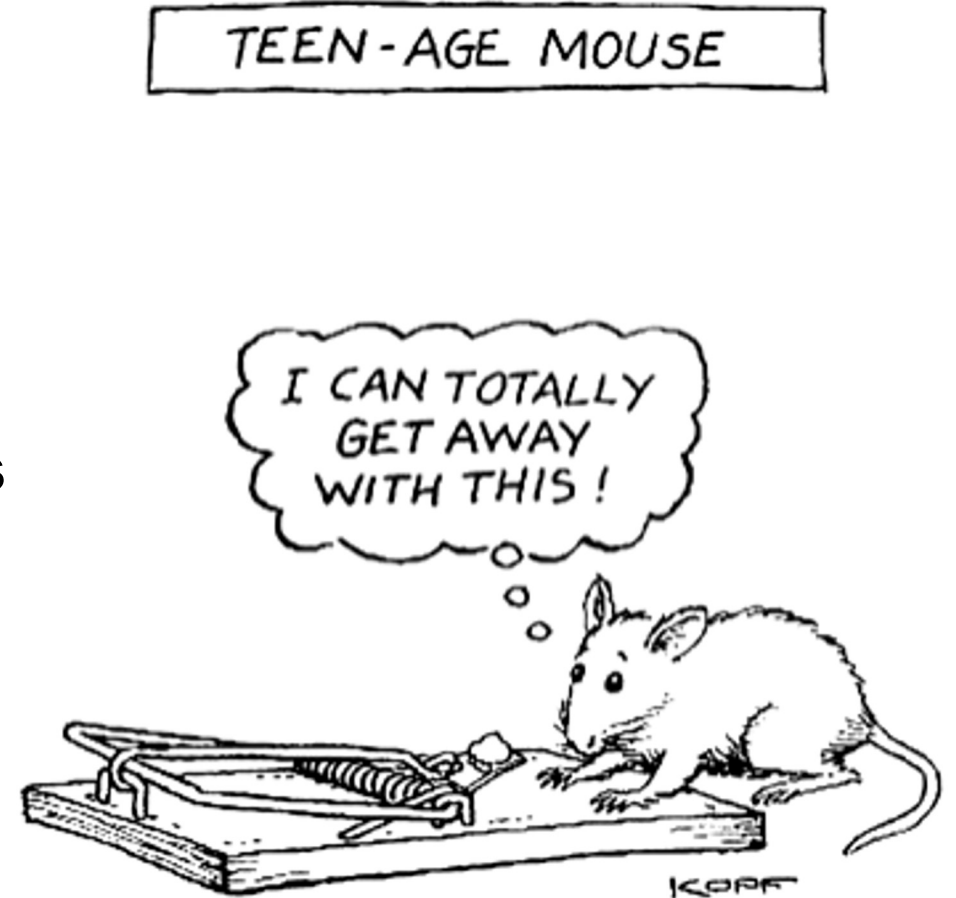
- Judge Matthew Tice
- Denise Merrill, OCFS/DHHS
- Joe Hufnagel, The Landing Place



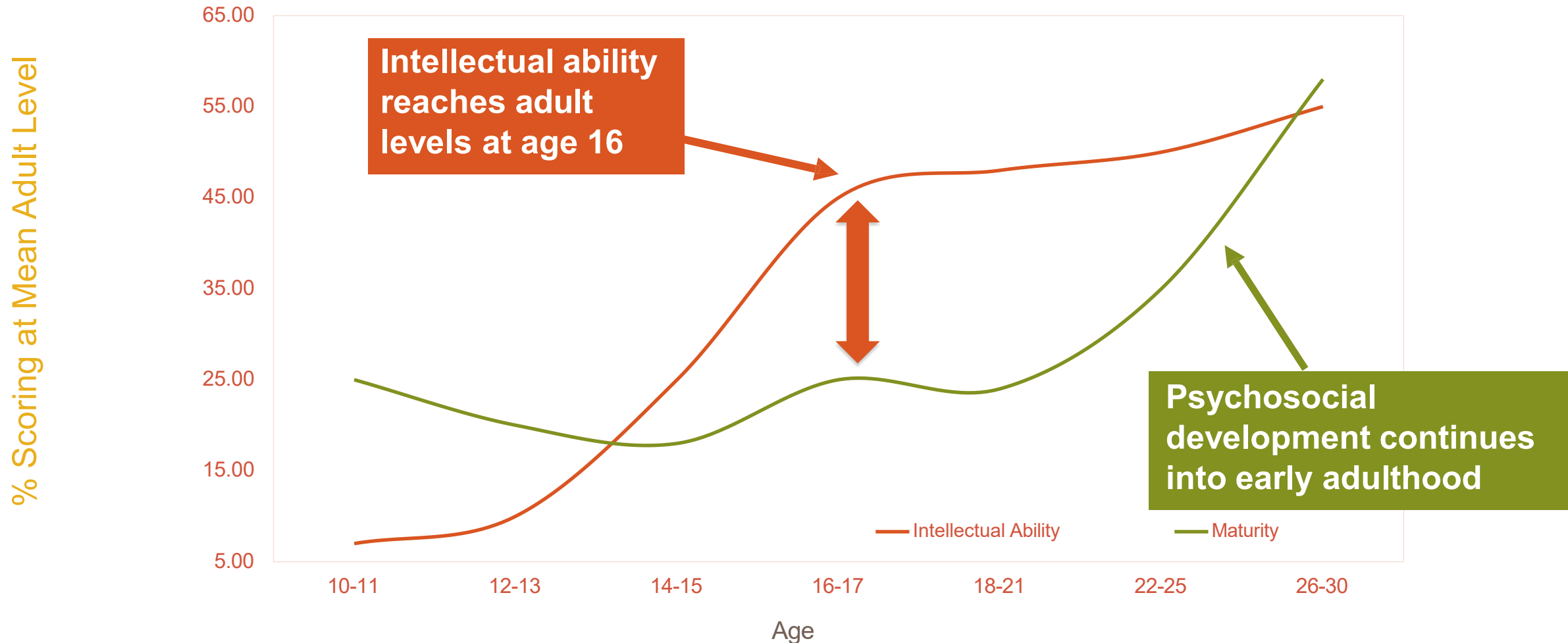
A Minute on The Adolescent Brain

Findings from the research:

- **The brain develops until at least age 25**, including the prefrontal cortex which governs reasoning, decision-making and impulse control
- **Adolescents are hard-wired to take risks**
 - Changes in dopamine levels
- **Experience impacts brain development**
 - Pruning and myelination



The Maturity Gap



SOURCE: Steinberg, Cauffman, Woolard, Graham, & Banich (2009)

Transformation Is Research-Based and Commonsense

Harris Poll Opinion Research, 2022

- **85%** believe most young people who break the law can be held accountable by the families and communities with the right resources.
- **86%** agree that connections to sports, work, school and community make youth less likely to get in trouble with the law.
- **90%** don't want young people to serve prison time for unlawfully possessing a gun if they haven't used it. (warning 16%; fine 25%; arrest with probation 49%; arrest with prison time 10%)

Let's Talk About Race: Disparities Persist in our Justice System

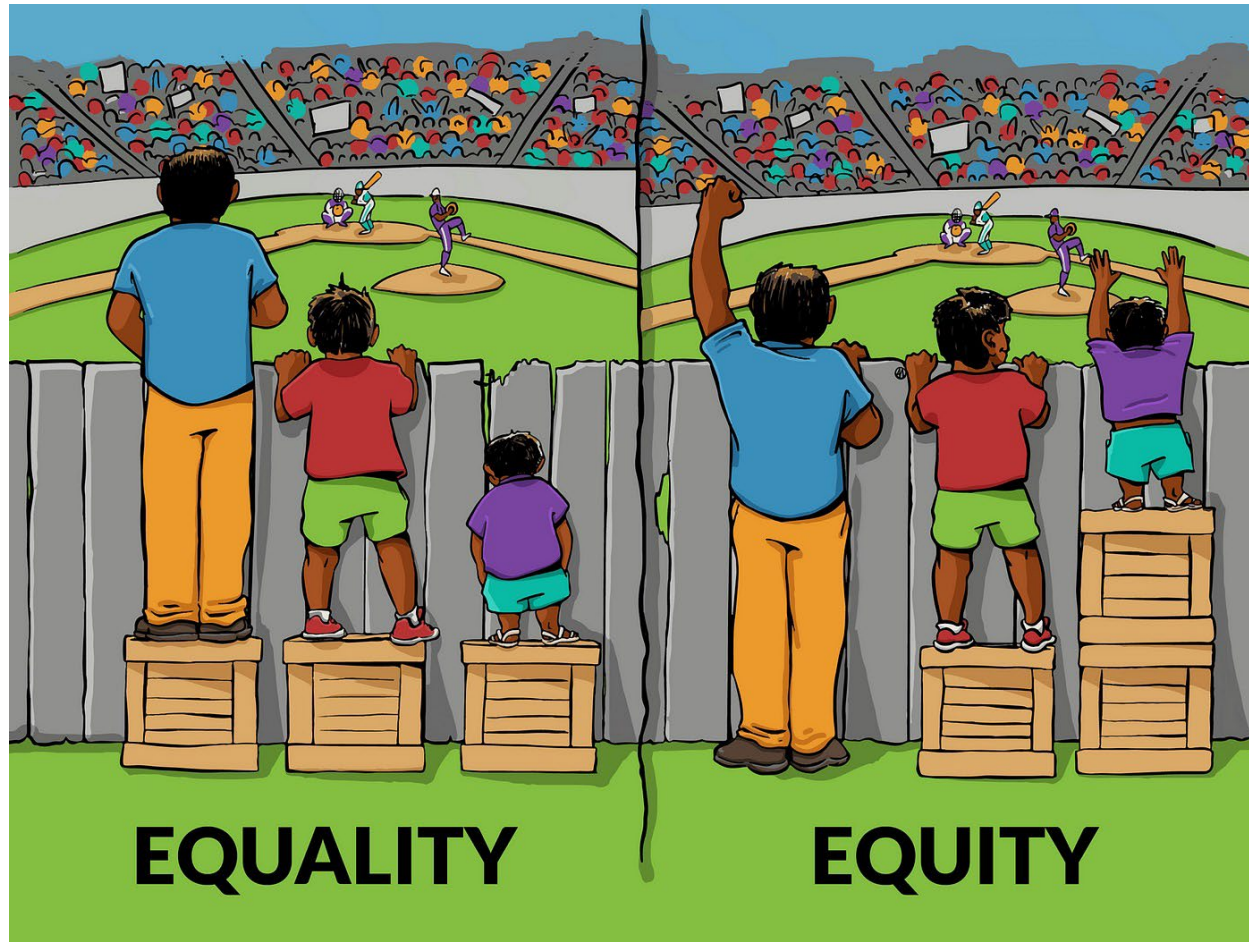
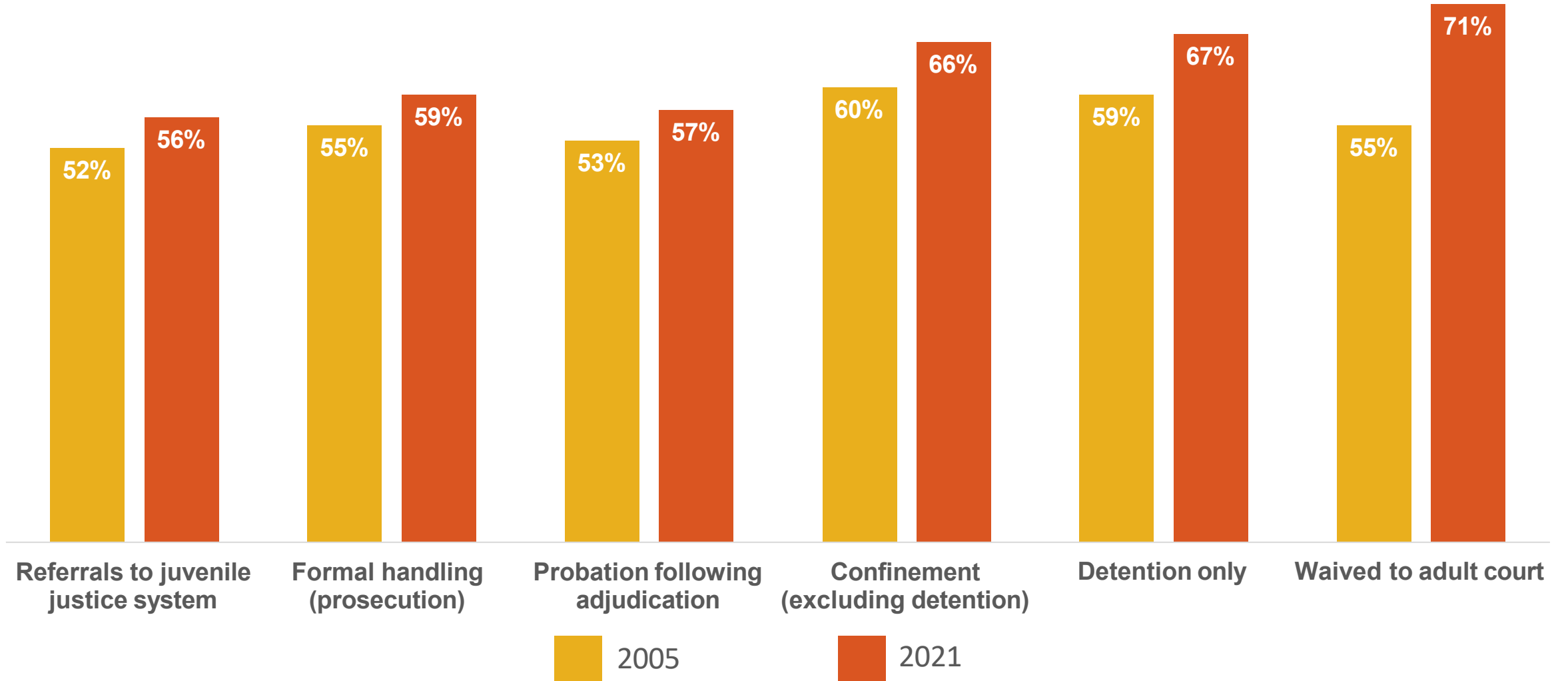


Figure 6: Increase in Over-representation of Youth of Color* Across System, 2005–2021



*Youth of color include youth of all races other than white, plus all Latino youth regardless of race.

Source. Easy Access to Juvenile Court Statistics (<https://www.ojdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezaics>).

Applying Research to Probation/Community Supervision Practice

So, if we know that youth:

- Are hard wired to take risks
- Tend to think in the short-term
- Lack or are developing psychosocial skills
- Are strongly influenced by their peers and surroundings

How should we structure our community supervision policies and practices?

Applying the Research to Probation/Community Supervision

Expect full compliance with conditions based on youth's fear of probation violation

Focus heavily on sanctions to try to motivate behavior

Fail to link youth to alternatives to negative influences and settings

VS.

Understand that youth will make mistakes and that their decision-making is influenced by the prospect of short-term rewards, particularly in intense situations and around peers

Focus on incentives/rewards and on teaching new behavior and skills

Connect youth to pro-social supports and activities, particularly in their home and community settings

Program Types with Positive Recidivism Effects*

- Cognitive-behavioral therapy
- Behavioral contracting; contingency management
- Social skills training
- Group counseling
- Family counseling; family crisis counseling
- Individual counseling
- Mentoring
- Challenge programs
- Victim-offender mediation
- Restitution; community service
- Remedial academic programs
- Job-related programs (vocational counseling, training, etc.)



The 10 Core Principles of Juvenile Probation

1 Center youth and families to individualize probation.

2 Promote equity regarding race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and disability status.

3 Align practice with research on adolescent development.

4 Minimize conditions of probation.

5 Minimize confinement.

6 Look to encourage success, not punish failure.

7 Be a bridge to opportunity and connection in the community.

8 Be a coach, teacher, mentor, and advocate – not a compliance monitor.

9 Aim for progress, not perfection.

10 Hold probation accountable for meaningful results.

THE ROLE OF THE JUDGE IN TRANSFORMING JUVENILE PROBATION

A Toolkit for Leadership

NCFJCJ
NATIONAL COUNCIL OF
JUVENILE AND FAMILY COURT JUDGES



Five keys to probation transformation:

- Goal-oriented, individualized case planning
- Incentives and rewards to support behavior change
- Minimal court-ordered conditions
- Alternatives to confinement for technical violations
- Probation as a disposition for youth involved in serious delinquency

Elements of Youth and Family Partnerships in Probation/Community Supervision

- I. Creating a staff culture centered on youth and families
- II. Defining what makes a family
- III. Supporting, guiding and advocating for youth and families
- IV. Empowering youth and family voices and retaining connections

“Family Engagement in the Juvenile Justice System Framework,” AECF

Available at: <https://www.aecf.org/blog/framework-and-tool-help-juvenile-justice-agencies-treat-families-as-partner>

For youth justice systems to be transformed, they must be smaller, focused and rooted in community partnerships

- **Raise the ceiling** by trusting probation instead of facilities for young people with serious offenses and complex risk and needs.
- **And probation trusting community partners** to play a central role in holding youth accountable and guiding their growth.
- **Raise the floor** by expanding community-led diversion



Maine Youth Community Supervision Initiative

Two Goals:

- (1) to make community supervision **smaller** by safely diverting more young people from formal system and court involvement, to community-based supports, services, and opportunities; and
- (2) to make community supervision **better** by ensuring it is strength-based, time-limited, rooted in relationship-building and community partnership, and focused on positive youth development, meaningful accountability and healing.

Maine Juvenile Justice System Highway

With 2024 data included

Delinquent Behavior

Total referrals: 2,073
1,656 misdemeanors (80%)
and 417 felonies (20%)

EXIT 1

No police contact

EXIT 2

Diversion by police
(no ATN filed)

NFAs: 166

JCCO closes with no further action (NFA)
(with or without referring to services)

EXIT 4

SYSTEM REFERRAL
(summons, arrest, other)

EXIT 5

Informal Adjustment (IA) with JCCO supervision

IAs: 378

Detention at any point along highway = increased likelihood of later placement

IA rejected by prosecutor

"Failed" IA

EXIT 3

Conditional Release
(at various points – at arrest, after petition, or after adjudication. And with or without court-ordered conditions)

PETITION FILED

Case dismissed by court or DA

EXIT 6

EXIT 7

Deferred disposition

Without court-ordered supervision
With court-ordered supervision

Returned for adjudication, but on lesser charge

"Failed" deferred disposition

ADJUDICATION

Formal probation supervision

EXIT 8

technical probation violation filed

Out of Home Placement or Commitment to DHHS or Long Creek

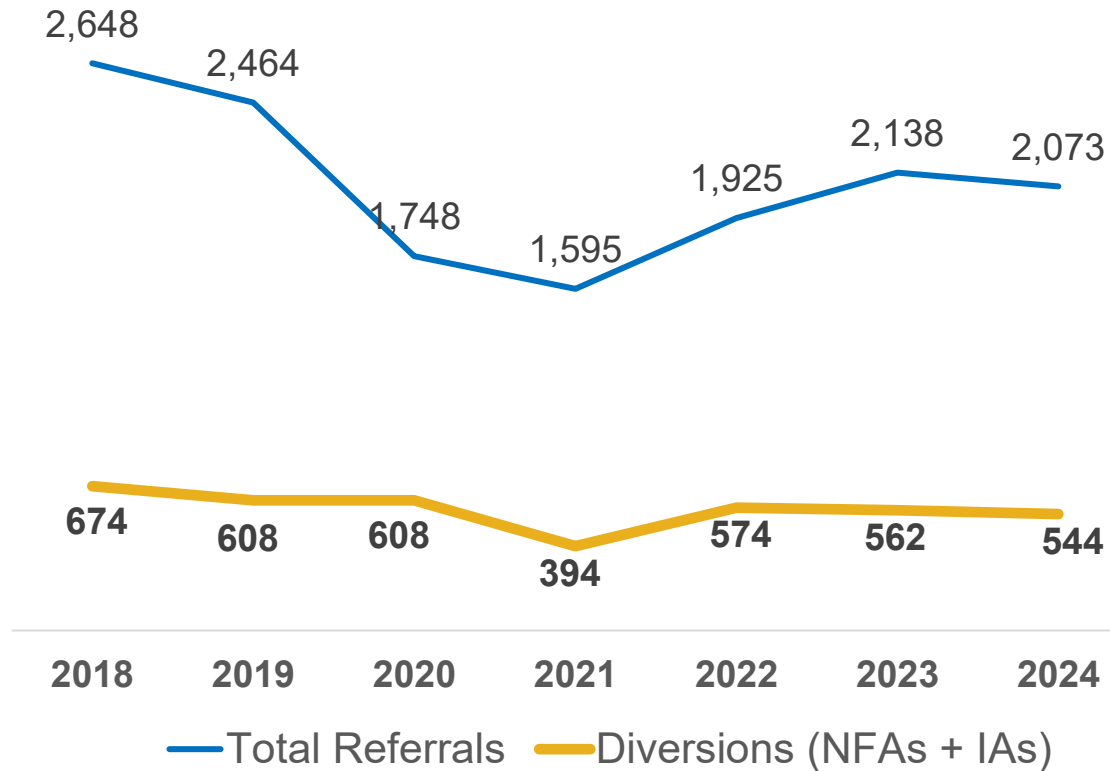
Goal 1: Making Community Supervision Smaller

Action Steps:

- Collaborative System Mapping
 - Identify Points of Diversion (pre-arrest, pre-summon, pre-petition)
- Review of best practice models in other jurisdictions
- Use local data and best practice examples to determine:
 - Appropriate use of assessments (risks and needs)
 - Who should be involved in diversion decisions
 - What supports are needed to be successful

NFAs and IAs combined, in relation to total system referrals 2018 – 2024

Statewide Referrals, No Further Actions and
Informal Adjustments
2018-2024



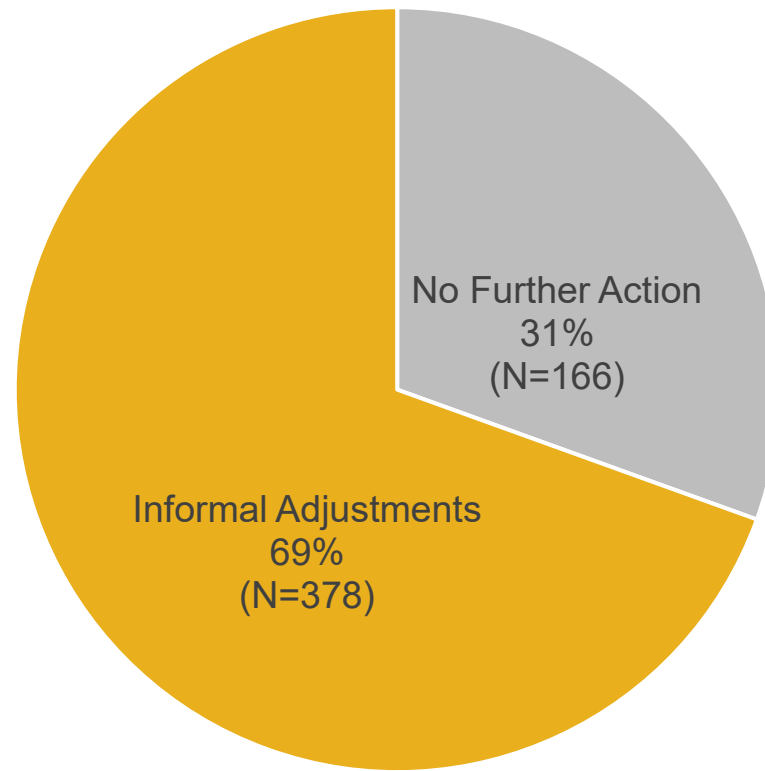
Takeaways:

- Roughly 1 in 4 referrals get **either** No Further Action (NFA) (diversion from DOC supervision) **OR** Informal Adjustment (IA), which means up to 6 months of supervision by a JCCO.
- Roughly 3 in 4 referrals (in total) result in formal JJ processing (a filed petition).

Source: Total referrals from DOC annual reports / NFA and IA data from DOC direct pull

NFA / IA breakdown for 2024

2024 Diversions*
(N=544)



Takeaways:

- **166 referrals (fewer than 1 out of 10 referrals) were fully diverted from DOC supervision.**
- The remaining 1,907 referrals (9 out of 10) resulted in some sort of DOC supervision.

Goal 2: Making Community Supervision Better

Action Steps:

- Redefine Juvenile Community Corrections Officer (JCCO) role as more coach than referee
 - [AECF Family-Engaged Case Planning Model Training](#)
- Increased Partnerships with and Training for Law Enforcement (ie. Policing the Teen Brain)
- Revise court forms to be shorter, more individualized

Implementation, Education & Outreach

- Regular Monthly Meeting of Core Team to Develop and Execute Workplan
- Stakeholder presentations
- Public-facing website/resource to house informational (Summary, PPT, System Map)
- Establishment of smaller, focused teams for priorities
- Pilot sites for implementation

Pilot Site #1: Biddeford/Old Orchard Beach

- Set goals around increasing NFA and IA diversions
 - Target population: Youth in grades 5-12
 - Establish eligibility criteria for diversion
- Anchor partnership (contract) between Apex Youth Connection and DOC to expand referral capacity
- Set up system to collect NFA and IA diversion data in site catchment area
- Prioritize training and TA on Family Engaged Case Planning for JCCOs
- Convene key stakeholders; outreach to schools, local law enforcement and other community-based organizations
- Collaboration with district court re: revised forms

Next Steps: What Can You Do?

- Learn more about the initiative at: Maine Youth Community Supervision Initiative.
<https://sites.google.com/view/maine-probation-transformation/maine>
- Let us know about groups or organizations that would like to hear about it.
- Share the information.



Additional Resources

- Annie E. Casey Foundation **Probation Transformation Training Series**
 - Course 1 provides general overview of probation transformation with lots of helpful resources
 - Course 3 is all about the Adolescent Brain and Youth Development
 - Exiting users [login here](#)
 - New registrants [register here](#)
- The Gault Center [Promoting Positive Youth Development: The Critical Need to Reform Youth Probation Orders](#)
- [Transforming Juvenile Probation](#), Center for Juvenile Justice Reform, Georgetown University's McCourt School of Public Policy