



# MAINE

JUVENILE JUSTICE ADVISORY GROUP  
Comprehensive Three-Year Plan  
2024-2026

**State of Maine**

**JUVENILE JUSTICE ADVISORY GROUP**

Comprehensive Three-Year Plan For

**Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Fiscal Years 2024-2026**

Submitted to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

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July 2024

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## PROGRAM NARRATIVE

### INTRODUCTION

The Maine Juvenile Justice Advisory Group (JJAG) is the State Advisory Group (SAG) established under the federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974 (JJDPA), which was reauthorized in 2018 and codified in Maine law (Title 34-A M.R.S. §1209). The JJAG prepares the state's Three-Year Plan, and the Maine Department of Corrections (MDOC) is the designated state agency responsible for administering the Title II Formula Grant Program according to the JJAG guidance. As part of its federal obligations, the JJAG must submit to OJJDP a Comprehensive Three-Year Plan that provides a roadmap for utilizing the Title II Formula Grant fund to address Maine's juvenile justice and delinquency prevention needs.

The JJAG is comprised of Governor-appointed at-large, defined seats and ex-officio members representing a range of State Government agencies, justice and youth-related areas. It is responsible for providing information to state agencies and local policymakers and supporting compliance with the core protections of the JJDPA. The Maine District Court serves as the Juvenile Court, which hears all cases where a juvenile (person under age 18 at the time of the offense) is alleged to have committed a juvenile crime. Illegal conduct committed by a juvenile not considered a juvenile crime is prosecuted in the Unified Criminal Court and may result in a criminal conviction.

Maine's JJAG has two full-time and one part-time staff housed at the Maine Department of Corrections: a full-time Juvenile Justice Specialist, a full-time Compliance Monitor, and a part-time Racial and Ethnic Disparities (R/ED) Coordinator. Maine affirms that recommendations regarding compliance with the requirements of paragraphs (11), (12), and (13) are submitted to the chief executive officer and the state legislature bi-annually. These employees obey all departmental policies regarding, operations, grant management, procurement, and RFA's or RFP's.



The Maine Juvenile Justice Advisory group began its comprehensive planning process for the Maine JJAG three-year plan in January 2024. The process began with a self-assessment of the previous plan to identify progress and objectives to carry forward into the new plan. Next, a national study of other states' plans was conducted to identify best practices and innovative strategies. Additionally, the Maine System Assessment Report, news articles, and other reputable sources were reviewed to understand the impact of juvenile justice policies, practices, outcomes, and perceptions around the state. After forming its writing committee, the JJAG reviewed and revised its vision, mission, and value statements to frame its goals and objectives.

Three major goals with corresponding objectives were identified for the new plan. Board members were actively engaged in multiple meetings to gather input and feedback on the goals and objectives, with continuous updates made to the writing outline based on this feedback. Crime data was analyzed, and the findings were reported. A digital dashboard and library for research content was also maintained and accessible to all board members. Opportunities for ongoing feedback were provided to board members to ensure continuous improvement in the strategic planning process.

## **HISTORICAL RACIAL CHALLENGES IN MAINE**

The [Maine Center for Economic Policy](#) described the ongoing economic inequalities confronted by multigenerational and immigrant Black Mainers. While economic conditions have improved, multigenerational Black Mainers were more than one and a half times as likely to be living in poverty as white non-Hispanic Mainers. At the same time, for Black immigrants and their children, the rate was almost three times as high. While Maine legislators attempt to leverage its workforce shortfalls with its growing immigrant population, newcomers often encounter barriers to integration, including language barriers, cultural differences, and discrimination. The American Civil

Liberties Union (ACLU) of Maine has reported on issues of harassment and discrimination against students of color across the state and at all grade levels since 2017.

Indigenous residents have confronted longstanding systemic injustices stemming from colonization, forced removals, and the suppression of cultural practices. These communities have faced struggles for land rights, sovereignty, and access to resources, compounded by limited economic opportunities and disparities in healthcare and education. Maine's history of xenophobia and racism also impacts its education system. In 2022, the Portland Public School District superintendent stated their research revealed racial discrimination was occurring within their schools. Undoubtedly, these racist attitudes also impact how juvenile justice system stakeholders legislate, administer, and interact with LGBTQIA+ youth and youth of color. The "2019 School-Based Policing in Maine: A Study on School Resource Officers in Maine's Public Schools" indicated Black and Hispanic students feel more vulnerable in the classroom, and their White and Asian peers feel more vulnerable in hallways, bathrooms, and locker rooms.

Consistent with national and historical trends, the Maine Juvenile Justice System & Reinvestment Task Force report documented racial disparities in the juvenile justice system, finding Maine's youth of color are disproportionately separated from their families and communities and retained at Long Creek Youth Development Center. Data from that assessment showed that although youth of color made up only nine percent of Maine's overall youth population aged 13 to 20, a disproportionate number of youths of color were committed to and detained at Long Creek.

## MODEL JUVENILE JUSTICE STATE

Understanding the racial, economic, and social challenges Maine's youth face, the JJAG strives to be a model juvenile justice state by embracing the guiding principles in

the [2020 Maine Juvenile Justice System Assessment](#), which the JJAG commissioned and funded with Title II dollars in 2019. The Assessment states that an effective juvenile justice system is one that:

1. Ensures fundamental fairness.
2. Recognizes the fundamental differences between youth and adults.
3. Recognizes individual differences and tailors interventions and services to the needs and assets of individual youth.
4. Lifts up youth potential.
5. Values safety.
6. Ensures accountability for all.
7. Values community, youth, and family voice.
8. Strives for equity regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, disability, LGBTQ+ status, and immigrant status.
9. Values cost effectiveness.
10. Follows the least restrictive alternative principle.

## JJAG VISION & VALUES

The JJAG Three-Year Plan is guided by these principles and informed by the recommendations included in the Assessment. The JJAG Board will evaluate and strive to showcase those principles in action consistently. The Maine Juvenile Code, Title 15 § 3002, specifies the first purpose of the juvenile system is “to secure for each juvenile subject to these provisions such care and guidance, preferably in the juvenile's own home, as will best serve the juvenile's welfare and the interests of society.” Accordingly, the Maine JJAG envisions a juvenile justice system that is responsive, equitable, and empowering; a system committed to providing resources, strategic funding, and expert guidance to cultivate an inclusive and rehabilitative environment that nurtures every young person's potential and provides them with transformative opportunities to thrive.

Five core values of the JJAG continue to guide our vision: 1) providing community-based services in the least restrictive setting, 2) reducing racial and ethnic disparities, 3) uplifting inclusive practices, 4) engaging and empowering youth and families, and 5) integrating funding, cross-agency collaboration, and community partnerships. These inclusive community building practices reflect in our vision, mission, and values and work toward reducing racial disparity within Maine's juvenile justice system.

## **SYSTEM DESCRIPTION**

Maine is a centralized state in its delivery of juvenile justice system services. State and municipal police and county sheriffs enforce Maine's laws. All have general law enforcement duties, with county and state police sharing responsibility for Maine's large rural areas.

The Maine Department of Corrections (MDOC) Division of Juvenile Services responds to referrals from law enforcement agencies throughout the state. Juvenile Community Corrections services are managed regionally among three separate regions. Each region is supervised by a Regional Correctional Manager (RCA), two Regional Correctional Managers (RCM), and several Juvenile Community Corrections Officers. A law enforcement officer may summon a youth to appear in court on a specified day or may arrest the youth and request authorization of detention from the Juvenile Community Corrections Officer (JCCO). Youth referred to Juvenile Community Corrections are supervised by JCCOs depending on where they reside. JCCOs continue to serve the youth at all points in the juvenile justice system, including intake, pre-adjudication supervision, probation, and reentry from confinement.

A Maine law enforcement officer may divert youths from the formal juvenile justice system. Diversion may include talking with a family to develop a plan to address the youth's behavior, contacting mental health professionals, or referring to specific programs locally available. When a JCCO receives a referral through a police report

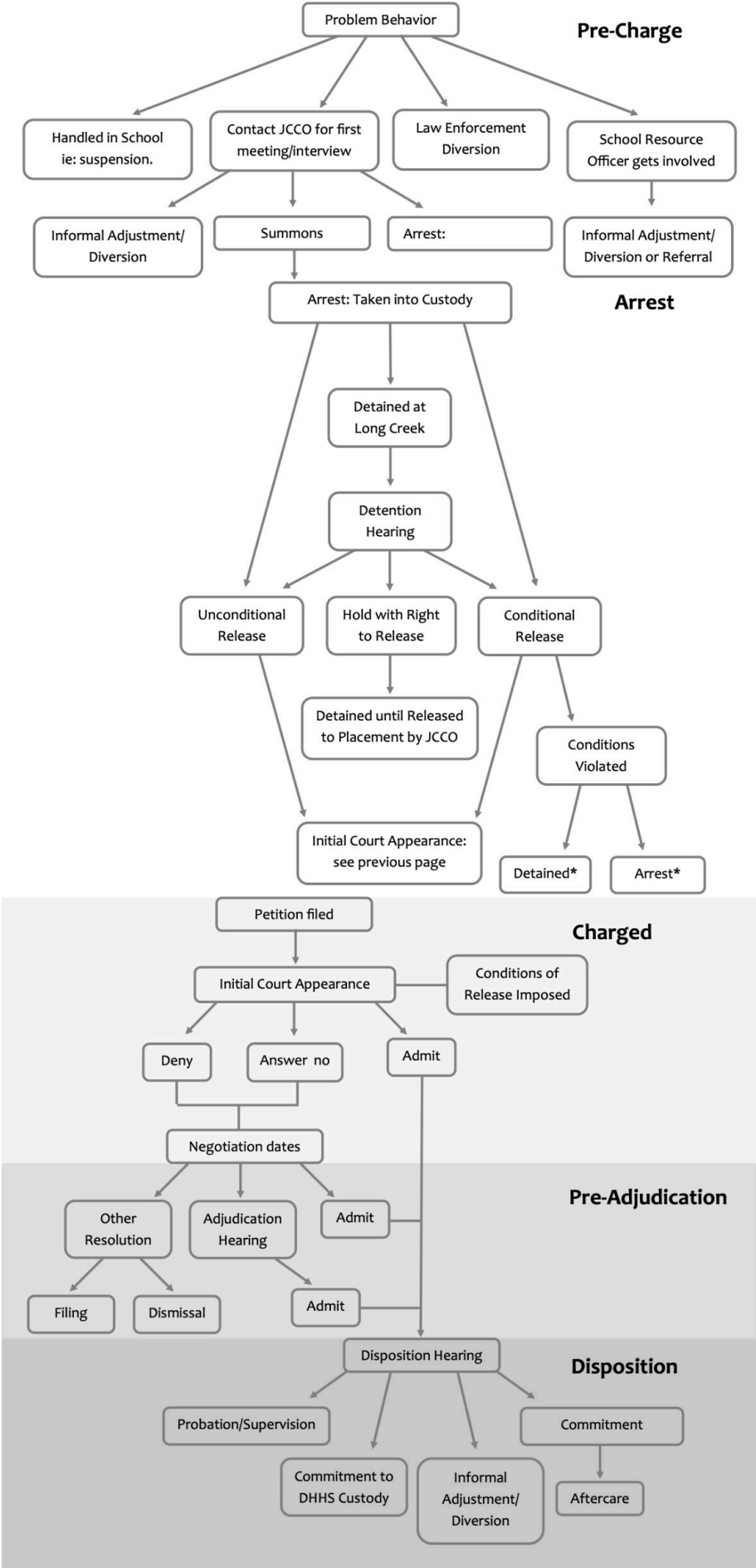


and juvenile summons, he/she sets up a preliminary investigation appointment with the juvenile and his/her parent(s) or legal guardian. During the preliminary investigation interview, the JCCO discusses the offense charged with the family and explains the juvenile's rights. The JCCO will begin collecting information from the juvenile and the juvenile's parents to determine whether diversion from the formal legal system is appropriate.

After a preliminary investigation, the JCCO might decide not to request a petition be filed, instead engaging the juvenile in an informal adjustment or a sole sanction, such as restitution and/or community service. If the JCCO determines that diversion is not appropriate and finds that the facts are sufficient for filing a petition with the juvenile court, the JCCO "shall request the prosecuting attorney to file a petition [to court]."

Long Creek Youth Development Center is the state's only secure facility for juveniles, which houses detained and committed youth. A youth may be detained for brief periods to ensure their presence in court when there is a risk of harm to themselves or others. A youth adjudicated delinquent may be committed to Long Creek Youth Development for an indeterminate period not exceeding age 21. Although the court imposes the maximum period of commitment, the superintendent of Long Creek has the discretion to authorize the earlier release of a juvenile to community reintegration status or may discharge a juvenile from the facility when the superintendent determines that discharge is in the best interest of the client or that the client has benefited optimally from the services and facilities of the facility.

According to federal law and the Maine Juvenile Code, secure detention of status offenders and non-offenders is prohibited. The parents of truants may be subject to sanctions; runaways may be taken into "interim care" by a law enforcement officer but "under no circumstances... be held involuntarily for more than 6 hours."



The MDOC contracts with local community-based organizations to provide services to youth involved in or at risk of becoming involved in the juvenile justice system. Such services include in-home services such as MST and FFT, alternative education services, mentoring and restorative justice activities.

The Departments of Health and Human Services, Education, and Labor fund programs outside the formal juvenile justice system directly affecting delinquency prevention. Many non-profit groups offer programming that is also funded through private foundations.

In Maine, the Juvenile Code does not permit the use of detention for status offenses, so a violation of the OJJDP's definition is also a violation of the Maine Code. Maine complies with the core requirement of deinstitutionalizing status offenders, sight and sound separation of adults from juveniles, jail removal and the reduction of racial and ethnic disparities. The documentation can be found in the compliance plan and the fully completed and signed Certification of Data form.

The JJAG supports several alternative programs, including Youth Court, Diversion Panels, Accountability Boards, and Community Circles. MDOC provides flexible funding to assist in access to these therapeutic programs. JJAG also supports flexible emergency funding to help support youth and their families in the community. Regional Care Teams are multi-disciplinary teams gathering to brainstorm solutions for individual youth that creatively use federal funding to fill gaps, respond to emergent needs, and strive for the best outcomes for youth in the community.

In Maine, much of the work done by the JCCO with youth includes input and family engagement at every step of the process, from initial contact with the legal system to discharge. When a youth is committed, Maine strives to ensure family engagement and discharge planning begins at intake. The JJAG has supported having a community engagement counselor both in the Lewiston/Auburn area and in rural Aroostook

County to help support populations that have historically disproportionately been impacted by the justice system. These engagement counselors focus on engaging youth and families before encountering the youth justice system, but they are also available to youth within that system.

Maine has established procedures to protect service recipients' rights and ensure appropriate privacy regarding records relating to services provided to any individual under the state plan. All agencies contracted with DOC comply with HIPPA and other relevant laws related to information sharing and privacy concerns.

Maine provides assurances that youth in the juvenile justice system are treated equitably based on gender, race, family income, and disability. Maine assures that approaches designed to strengthen the families of delinquent and other youth and prevent juvenile delinquency will be considered and that assistance will be available. Maine has strong internal fiscal controls and funds accounting procedures to ensure prudent use, proper disbursement, and accurate accounting of funds received under this title. The Financial Management and Internal Controls questionnaire has been filled out in the Justgrants application for this solicitation.

Staff that work with youth receive training to prevent the use of dangerous practices, unreasonable restraints, including the use of restraints on visibly pregnant, youth and unreasonable isolation (policy 9.15 & 10.01). Their training also includes the use of effective behavior management techniques (policy 15.01), an understanding of adolescent development and behaviors (policy 10.03), and a use of force continuum (policy 09.18). Maine policy prohibits the use of unreasonable restraints and isolation. A violation of this policy could result in a corrective action, a work suspension, or even termination if management found the violation egregious.

Upon detention intake at Long Creek Youth Development Center, all youth are given a risk assessment (MAYSI and PREA Screen) by staff on duty. Nursing uses a structured



screening tool that includes questions about mental health, substance disorders and sexual abuse. Within seven days, the youth meet with a clinician who conducts a mental health appraisal to determine needs. This is a comprehensive list of conditions, services, and needs that the youth may have. The DOC and DHHS Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) developed it to determine whether a youth needs immediate clinical support. Youth committed to Long Creek undergo additional assessments as determined appropriate by clinical, education, and programming staff. Within 30 days of commitment, an individualized treatment plan is developed with the resident, their JCCO, and supportive adults in the community. The plan is reviewed monthly by the resident's team and quarterly by the classification board and targets areas such as family, education, friends, substance use, peers, and emotional health. Regularly scheduled team meetings and quarterly classification meetings help staff and residents develop a release plan that includes housing, services, transfer of school credit, employment and support services the youth will need when they leave the facility.

Wellpath is contracted to provide medical, dental, mental health, behavioral health, and substance use disorder education and treatment services to all detained and committed youth at Long Creek Youth Development Center. This includes on-site nursing coverage at all times and on-call availability of other providers outside of their normal working schedule.

## **NARRATIVE OVERVIEW**

The JJAG includes members from MDOC, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), the Department of Education (DOE), Department of Labor (DOL) the Department of Public Safety (DPS), and the Courts. Each month, these agencies report on ongoing activities related to the JJAG's work and the three-year plan to allow for more effective federal and state funding coordination.

The JJAG Three-year plan reflects this input and a commitment to address the findings and recommendations included in the [2020 Maine Juvenile Justice System Assessment](#). When sub-awards are granted, priority is given to organizations that use evidence-based and promising programs, such as Boys & Girls Club SMART Moves and SMART GIRLS, to help youth recognize risky situations and behaviors and avoid early exposure to drugs, alcohol, tobacco, or premature sexual experiences. The goal is to strengthen the community's ability to meet the needs of the youth. Programs with promising data and ongoing positive engagement and outcome rates are prioritized over programs with little to no data.

The JJAG has issued two Requests for Applications (RFAs) to support community-based organizations serving marginalized groups, including Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC), and asylum seekers. These initiatives aim to address crises without involving law enforcement. Requests for Applications were issued for Racial and Ethnic Disparities education for JJAG members and all DOC Juvenile Services Division staff inside and outside Long Creek Youth Detention Center. These trainings intended to broaden the understanding of the mostly white JJAG and white DOC staff to learn about the brain science of bias and develop a deeper understanding of the historical trauma that has impacted Mainers in the BIPOC communities and the unearned privileges that come from not being a part of those communities.

Through these RFAs, the JJAG funded numerous small community-based programs already active within these diverse communities. These programs are equipped to address cultural differences and language barriers, assisting new Mainers in navigating and understanding our school system, its disciplinary practices, and even the juvenile justice system. Cultural Engagement Mentors at the Mik'Maq, Maliseet, and Passamaquoddy tribes and Teen Centers in Kennebec and Aroostook Counties with youth advisory councils utilizing evidence-based programs to promote healthy lifestyle choices. These initiatives aim to assist youth in developing critical life skills and help them avoid involvement with the juvenile justice system.

The Maine JJAG currently has six young adults under the age of 28 appointed to its board. However, challenges persist in engaging young adult members as they work to balance the demands of their work and education schedules with the requirements of the JJAG Board. JJAG has partnered with the University of Southern Maine to build its capacity to recruit young adult members and develop alternative methods to engage current youth and other past or present system-involved youth to ensure authentic youth voices are elevated in the juvenile justice system.

Maine's JJAG continues to support Regional Care Teams, which allows a justice system-involved youth to request needs support from data plans to help with heat or rent, emergency shelter, or clothes needed to attend school or play organized sports to help them remain in their homes and communities. This initiative began in 2020 at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. MDOC matches the money JJAG added to sustain these efforts—a great example of leveraging federal dollars with state dollars to benefit a larger population in our State. This support enables the Regional Care Team to expand its services to any youth who needs or requires support to remain in the home, in their communities, and avoid contact with the juvenile justice system. At this current time the Regional Care teams have helped 167 of Maine's youth with \$71,000.00 cumulative dollars.

## **ANALYSIS OF YOUTH CRIME & NEEDS**

Maine's Juvenile Justice data collection is conducted by four major sources throughout Maine. Those sources include the Department of Public Safety (DPS) Crime in Maine, Incident Based Report System (IBR), the Federal Bureau of Investigation Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) Program, and the MDOC Juvenile Services data report. The DPS report includes crime data from all police departments, including the Maine State Police and municipal, county, and college, totaling 150 law enforcement agencies. Referrals are measured at five data points over the juvenile system: Referrals (Arrests),

Diversion, Detention, Secure Confinement, and Adult Transfer. Limitations in the data collection process exist, obstructing the clearest understanding of the system to reduce racial and ethnic disparities. For example, only the first diversions are recorded in the data collection; the second and third diversions are not.

According to the [2022 DPS Crime in Maine report](#), 1,839 juvenile arrests under 18 were made, 6% of all adult and juvenile arrests. Crimes such as simple assault, intimidation, property damage, shoplifting, larceny, drug/narcotic violations, and liquor law violations were amongst the highest reported juvenile arrests. 141 out of 1404 violent crimes (murder, non-negligent manslaughter, rape, aggravated assault, and robbery) were committed by offenders aged 10-17. Only one violent crime was committed by a youth under the age of 10.

Six percent of juvenile cases were classified as sexual assault compared to only 1% of adults over this time. Maine also experienced 14 instances of hate-biased offenses amongst offenders under 18. The only group higher in this category were offenders aged 45-55 with 15 hate-biased offenses.

The [2023 Juvenile Division Overview](#) indicated males outnumbered girls by 2:1 and sometimes as high as 3:1 ratio. The highest number of youth referrals by race were 83% (1771) White, 9% (200) Black, and 2% (31) each amongst Native Americans and two or more races. Diversion rates went from 67% of eligible cases in January 2023 to 100% in December 2023, with five months averaging in the 91%—98% range. The highest referral rates by county included Cumberland (210), York (192), and Penobscot (131). The remaining counties ranged from 88 referrals to 16 referrals. The highest referral rates by law enforcement agencies included Sanford Police Department (102), Westbrook Police Department (78), Cumberland Sheriff's Office (71), and Augusta Police Department (71). The remaining agencies ranged from 69 referrals to 26 referrals. The report found that youth of color saw a nearly 50% reduction in detentions and commitments in 2022 than in 2020.



## MAINE INTEGRATED YOUTH HEALTH SURVEY

The Maine Department of Health and Human Services and the Maine Department of Education collaborate to produce the [Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey](#) (MIYHS), “a biennial survey of Maine students in grades 5 through 12 that monitors health behaviors and attitudes regarding tobacco, alcohol, substance use, mental health, nutrition, physical activity, and protective factors.” The MIYHS gathers information on the health behaviors of over 50,000 middle and high school students across Maine. First administered in 2009, the MIYHS provides publicly available data reports for the state, geographic public health districts, and counties.

The 2023 MIYHS indicated that an average of 43% of middle and high school girls self-reported experiencing poor mental health, including stress, anxiety, and depression, in comparison to 18% of boys. LGBTQ students reported the highest levels of poor mental health, as high as 62%. Only 27% of middle and high school students report their feelings of sadness and hopelessness to an adult. Also, nearly 18% of high school students and 23% of middle school students have seriously considered attempting suicide. These statistics are consistently highest amongst girls at 32% and 29%. Marijuana usage is slightly higher amongst high school girls at 34% compared to boys at 29.5%.

According to the touchpoint data, Maine had an overall increase in referrals in FY 2022. It is reasonable as during this time frame Maine’s Stay at Home Orders were lifted, school resumed in person teaching, stores reopened, and communities began to come together again for events. When comparing FY 2020 – FY 2021 to FY 2022 there is still a remarkable drop in the reliance on Pre-Trial Detention across all groups, Secure Detention also shows a downward trend and during these years no youth was transferred to the adult system. However, racial and ethnic disparities are still present in our data, at all touchpoints in the report. JJAG will strive to have an impact on these percentages by integrating DEI into all activities, grants made, projects supported, and policy or practice changes to be made in the future.

TOUCHPOINTS BY RACE/ETHNICITY

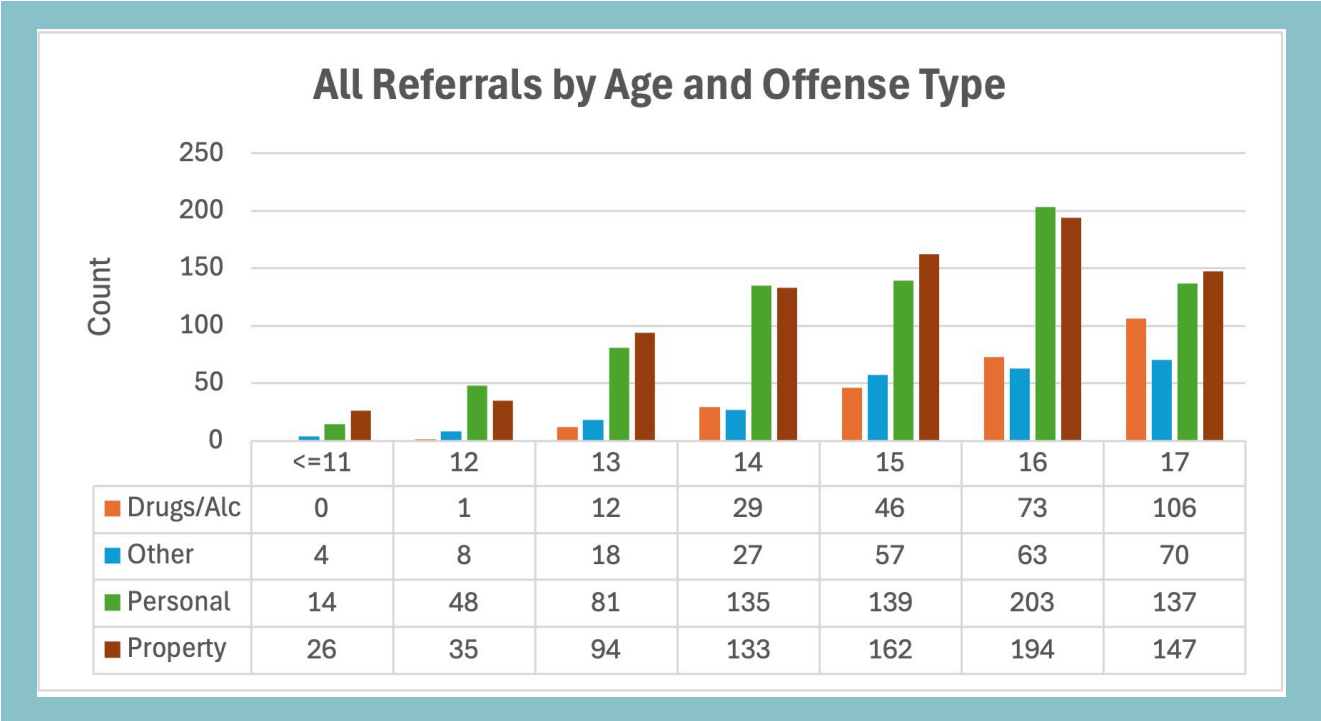
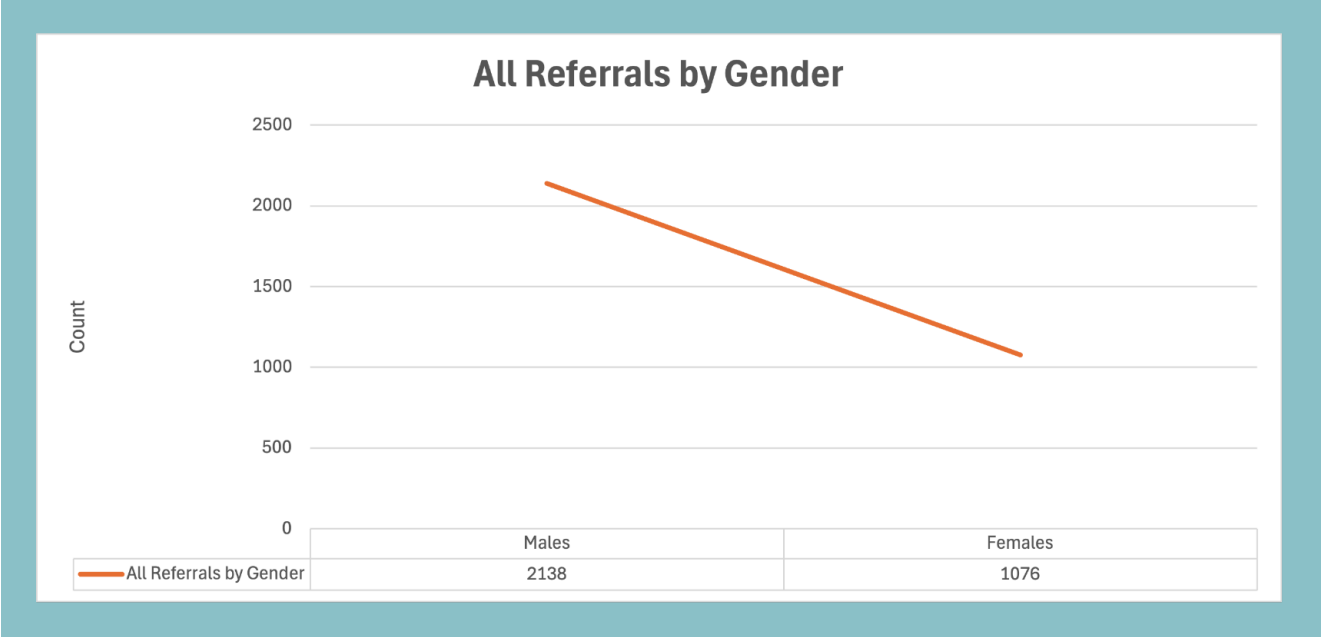
| Contact FY2022     |   | White   | Black or African American | Hispanic/Latino | American Indian/Native Alaskan | Asian  | Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander | Total   |
|--------------------|---|---------|---------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|--------|---|---------|
| Population         |   | 106,084 | 4,492                     | 3,606           | 1,121                          | 2,253  | 0   | 117,556 |
| Referrals/Arrests  | n | 1,540   | 183                       | 33              | 25                             | 6      | 11  | 1,798   |
|                    | % | 1.45%   | 4.07%                     | 0.92%           | 2.23%                          | 0.27%  | 0.71%                                     |         |
| Diversion          | n | 610     | 57                        | 9               | 4                              | 2      | 1   | 683     |
|                    | % | 39.61%  | 31.15%                    | 27.27%          | 16.00%                         | 33.33% | 9.09%                                     |         |
| Pretrial Detention | n | 81      | 19                        | 10              | 1                              | 0      | 9   | 120     |
|                    | % | 5.26%   | 10.38%                    | 30.30%          | 4.00%                          | 0%     | 81.82%                                    |         |
| Secure Confinement | n | 16      | 4                         | 1               | 0                              | 0      | 0   | 21      |
|                    | % | 1.04%   | 2.19%                     | 3.03%           | 0.00%                          | 0.00%  | 0.00%                                     |         |
| Adult Transfer     | n | 0       | 0                         | 0               | 0                              | 0      | 0   | 0       |
|                    | % | 0.00%   | 0.00%                     | 0.00%           | 0.00%                          | 0.00%  | 0.00%                                     |         |

| Contact FY2021     |   | White   | Black or African American | Hispanic/Latino | American Indian/Native Alaskan | Asian  | Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander | Total   |
|--------------------|---|---------|---------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|--------|---|---------|
| Population         |   | 106,084 | 4,492                     | 3,606           | 1,121                          | 2,253  | 0   | 117,556 |
| Referrals/Arrests  | n | 1,368   | 115                       | 54              | 26                             | 13     | 1   |         |
|                    | % | 1.29%   | 2.56%                     | 1.50%           | 2.32%                          | 0.57%  |   |         |
| Diversion          | n | 503     | 25                        | 15              | 9                              | 5      | 0   |         |
|                    | % | 36.77%  | 21.74%                    | 27.78%          | 34.62%                         | 38.46% | 0.00%                                     |         |
| Pretrial Detention | n | 88      | 22                        | 6               | 3                              | 1      | -   |         |
|                    | % | 6.43%   | 19.13%                    | 11.11%          | 11.54%                         | 7.69%  | 0.00%                                     |         |
| Secure Confinement | n | 14      | 4                         | 3               | 2                              | -      | -   |         |
|                    | % | 1.02%   | 3.48%                     | 5.56%           | 7.69%                          | 0.00%  | 0.00%                                     |         |
| Adult Transfer     | n | 0       | 0                         | 0               | 0                              | 0      | 0   |         |
|                    | % | 0.00%   | 0.00%                     | 0.00%           | 0.00%                          | 0.00%  | 0.00%                                     |         |

| Contact FY2020     |   | White   | Black or African American | Hispanic/Latino | American Indian/Native Alaskan | Asian | Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander | Total   |
|--------------------|---|---------|---------------------------|-----------------|--------------------------------|-------|---|---------|
| Population         |   | 106,084 | 4,492                     | 3,606           | 1,121                          | 2,253 | 0   | 117,556 |
| Referrals/Arrests  | n | 1,343   | 146                       | 55              | 22                             | 4     | 0   |         |
|                    | % | 1.27%   | 3.25%                     | 1.53%           | 2.28%                          | 0.17% | 0%  |         |
| Diversion          | n | 525     | 41                        | 9               | 4                              | 2     | 0   |         |
|                    | % | 39.09%  | 28.08%                    | 16.36%          | 18.18%                         | 50%   | 0%  |         |
| Pretrial Detention | n | 95      | 46                        | 8               | 0                              | 0     | 0   |         |
|                    | % | 7.07%   | 31.51%                    | 14.55%          | 0%                             | 0%    | 0%  |         |
| Secure Confinement | n | 13      | 7                         | 2               | 0                              | 0     | 0   |         |
|                    | % | 0.97%   | 4.79%                     | 3.64%           | 0%                             | 0%    | 0%  |         |
| Adult Transfer     | n | 0       | 0                         | 0               | 3                              | 0     | 0   |         |
|                    | % | 0%      | 0%                        | 0%              | 13.64%                         | 0%    | 0%  |         |

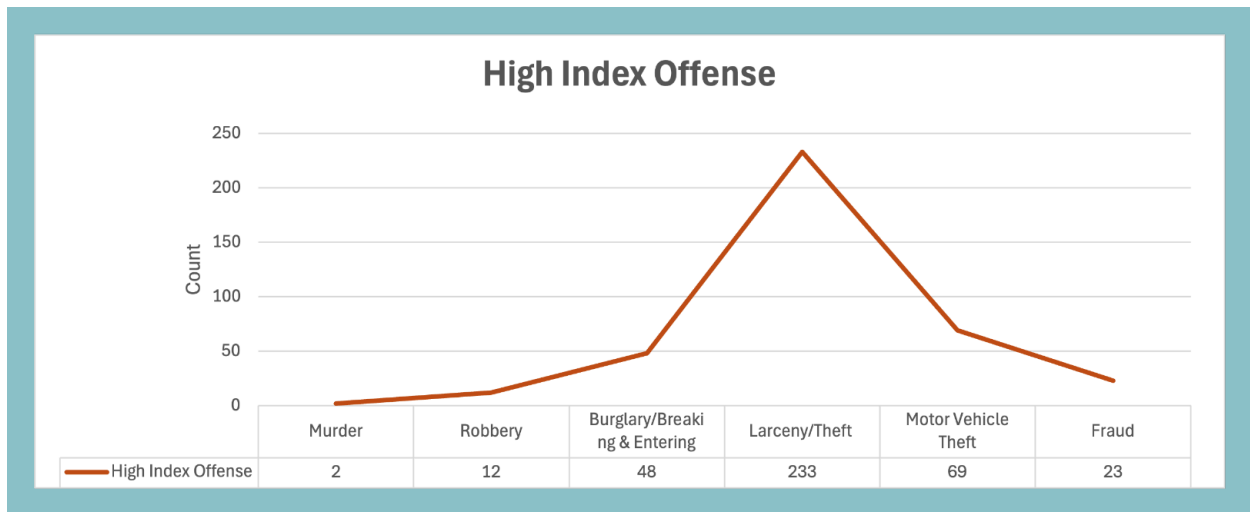
AGE & GENDER

The 2023 Juvenile Division Overview report specified All Referrals by Gender, as displayed in the chart below. Additionally, the highest rate of referrals occurred among the 14-17 age group in personal and property damage.



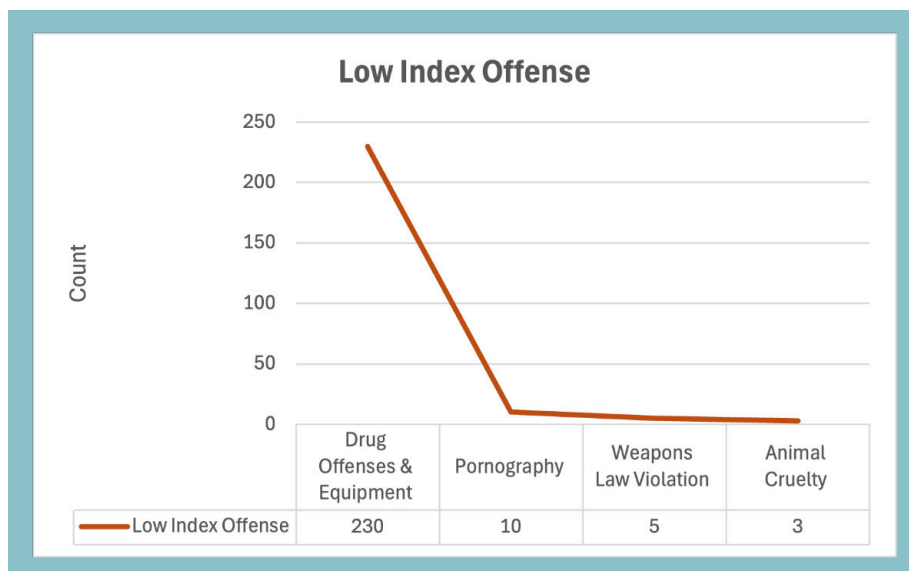
## HIGH INDEX OFFENSES

The 2023 Juvenile Division Overview report specified All Referrals by Gender, as displayed in the chart below. Additionally, the highest rate of referrals occurred among the 14-17 age group in personal and property damage.



## LOW INDEX OFFENSE

As indicated in the chart below, Drug Offenses and Equipment and Alcohol are two of the most frequent low-index offenses, and All Other Offenses (Except Traffic) are the most frequent offenses. This is referral data and does not reflect the resolution in these cases. The MDOC uses flexible funding options to assist youth in their communities with treatment when needed. Funds are also available through the Regional Care Teams, supported with funding via the JJAG.





## STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Maine has made meaningful progress in recent years in reducing the number of youths involved in the youth justice system, but challenges remain.

In 2019, JJAG funded the Center for Children’s Law and Policy (CCLP) to work with a statewide task force to assess the state’s juvenile justice system. From July 2019 to February 2020, the CCLP analyzed data, reviewed policies, procedures, and programs used in the juvenile justice system, interviewed more than 100 stakeholders from across the state, conducted six focus groups with youth, including tribal youth and youth detained and committed at Long Creek, and gathered community input from four town hall forums and a community survey distributed statewide and accessible online. Released at the end of February 2020, the report provides a roadmap with 45 short-, mid-and long-term recommendations for Maine to fundamentally transform the juvenile justice system, to ensure that our youth have access to a robust continuum of community-based care, and, with the report’s final recommendation, to "achieve the removal of all youth from Long Creek." The JJAG’s current three-year plan reflects recommendations of the System Assessment and seeks to continue to build on the efforts to strengthen further and implement those recommendations.

Despite an increased focus on diversion and reduced reliance on secure detention and long commitments, persistent challenges remain. A focused and coordinated plan to invest in a robust and accessible continuum of care for system-involved youth has yet to be realized. While initiatives like the Regional Care Teams have improved cross-agency collaboration, youth involved in the justice system are too frequently categorically excluded from services or experience geographical or cultural barriers to accessing needed support services. Oftentimes, alternative supports and services have long waitlists or are not available.

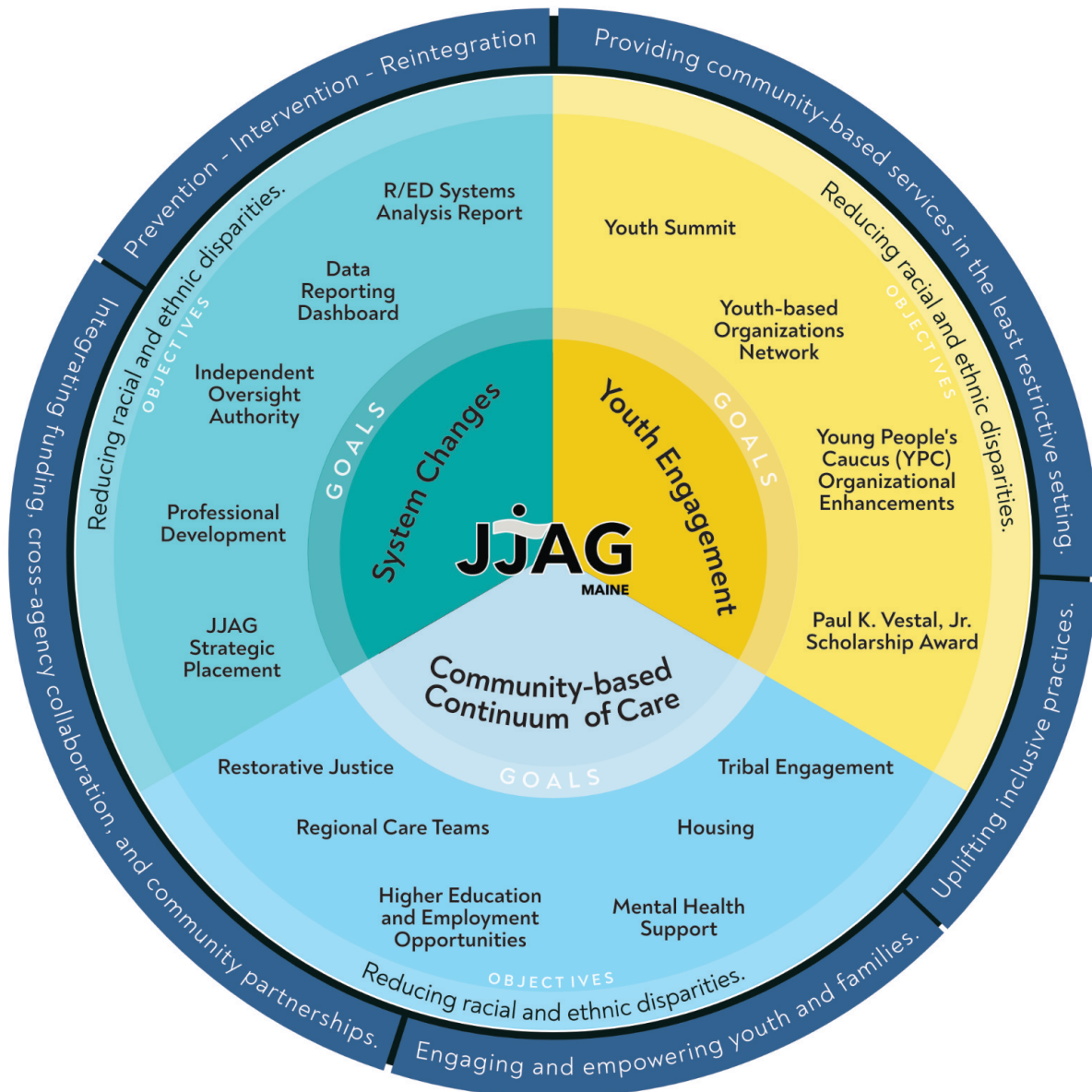
Long Creek Youth Development Center, the state's only juvenile correctional facility, has faced ongoing staffing shortages, leadership changes, and other struggles that have led to the reported use of force, segregation, and unsafe conditions for both the youth and staff. According to the [New York Times article published in February 2024](#), the state legislature failed to require the state to develop a plan to close the center. Discussions on the timeline to repurpose or close the Center and create smaller, more therapeutic alternatives remain ongoing. In June 2022, the United States Department of Justice (USDOJ) issued a letter of findings notifying Maine that it is violating the Americans with Disabilities Act due to its overreliance on segregated facilities and its failure to provide adequate community-based services, resulting in unnecessary institutionalization of children with disabilities. The DOJ specifically identified Long Creek as one such setting, finding: "Children are frequently confined at Long Creek due to Maine's failure to provide more integrated behavioral health services." Long Creek is a secure facility, and most of its young residents have multiple mental health diagnoses. As noted above, children with behavioral health needs are routinely incarcerated at Long Creek solely to receive behavioral health care. If behavioral health care services were available in the community, children who are appropriate for such services could await trial or serve their sentences at home with their families."

## **R/ED FRAMEWORK**

The JJAG understands the importance of collaboration and integration with the R/ED Committee's goals to see racial and ethnic disparities in the justice system continue to decline by 10% or more among Black, Indigenous People of Color (BIPOC) youth throughout Maine. The focus will be on seeing reduction in disparities at the front end of the system at the early decision points of arrest, diversion and detention. Funding prevention-based programming, supporting the Tribal Cultural Engagement Mentors, publishing and maintaining an asset map of the available continuum of care services, and supporting career development pathways for job placement programs, apprenticeship, and opportunities for higher education are some of the three-year plan

goals' that speak robustly to the aligned efforts of JJAG and the R/ED Committee. The three-year plan also supports the indicators of success outlined by the R/ED Committee and the [2020 Maine Juvenile Justice System Assessment](#) to have smaller, more therapeutic facilities for youth detained or committed inside or closer to their home; more attendant care beds available in the cities of Auburn and north of Bangor, as an alternative to detention; ensure all our local police forces in Maine know and have access to community-based diversion options; and support restorative justice programs, alternatives to detention and incarceration, and alternative to suspension or expulsion in our schools. The JJAG's commitment to developing an improved data-reporting and analysis system is essential to establish a baseline for tracking and documenting disparities. It will help guide the R/ED Committee, law enforcement agencies, lawmakers, policymakers, community leaders, and the JJAG toward more effective data-driven decisions and mechanisms for success.

## GOALS & OBJECTIVES



The Maine JJAG’s goals and objectives were developed in alignment with our values to provide community-based services in the least restrictive setting, reduce racial disparities, uplift inclusive practices, engage and empower youth and families, and integrate funding, cross-agency collaboration, and community partnerships. The goals and objectives aim to directly support prevention, intervention, or reintegration opportunities for Maine youth, further solidifying our commitment to being a model juvenile justice state.

## GOAL 1: COMMUNITY-BASED CONTINUUM OF CARE

The JJAG will leverage available federal resources in collaboration with other stakeholders to allocate resources and support efforts to develop and maintain a community-based continuum of care that includes more effective crisis responses, higher education and employment opportunities for upward mobility, mental health support, and tribal engagement for Maine youth involved in or at risk of becoming involved in the juvenile justice system. These objectives align with our inclusive community building values to provide community-based services in the least restrictive setting, reduce racial disparities, and integrate funding, cross-agency collaboration, and community partnerships.

### A. Community-Based Responses

- Inclusive supportive housing for system-involved youth with an emphasis on youth transitioning out of secure care.
- Restorative justice programs that effectively reduce system involvement and promote accountability to the impacted person and/or community and healing for the system-involved youth, their families, community, and persons harmed by the incident.
- Targeted diversion and related capacity-building efforts for girls, LGBTQIA+ youth, and historically or currently marginalized populations. This is in continued support of the goal to end the incarceration of girls in Maine.
- Prevention-based programming using research-based approaches to steer youth from being system-involved.
- Expand Regional Care Teams to help individual youth remain and thrive in their homes and communities.
- An asset map of the available continuum of care services is developed, published, and maintained.

## **B. Alternatives to Incarceration**

Support state efforts to expand community-based alternatives to incarceration and to develop smaller, more therapeutic residential options consistent with state legislation and the final [2020 Maine Juvenile Justice System Assessment](#) recommendation to remove all youths from Long Creek.

## **C. Higher Education and Employment Opportunities**

- Career development and job placement programs for transitioning youth.
- Career pathways that highlight apprenticeship and opportunities for higher education.

## **D. Mental Health Support**

Support for counseling and therapy services, early therapeutic opportunities for youth, and substance abuse support that include trauma-informed responses to delinquent behavior, adolescent development, and mental and behavioral health needs in collaboration with DOC, DHHS, and other stakeholders.

## **E. Tribal Engagement**

- Fund youth representatives to attend tribal summits.
- Develop ongoing communication with tribes to identify program set-asides.
- Continue to support tribal initiatives that support reducing racial and ethnic disparities.

The community-based continuum of care provides direct prevention, intervention, and reintegration services. The JJAG's capacity to continue supporting our Regional Care Teams, restorative justice, mental health, and other services, remains central to our mission of reducing racial and ethnic disparities. The JJAG will continue to support smaller, community-based solutions over secure commitment facilities.



Maine strives to limit referrals into the youth justice system by providing robust diversion options and supporting the training of more people in restorative justice practices. JJAG will continue to support gender-specific services to prevent youth delinquency, which is part of Maine's work on the deinstitutionalization of girls, a goal set out in collaboration with the Vera Institute. The JJAG has also supported the evidence-based and gender-specific programs of SMART Moves, SMART Girls, and Youth Advocate Programs (YAP) mentors.

Additional focus will be placed on higher education and employment opportunities to provide justice-involved youth with more aspirational opportunities during reintegration. The JJAG will explore the release of an RFP for agencies willing to provide placement services for higher education and employment.

The JJAG continues to support plans to increase the number of services to youth in rural areas. Some of this will be through the JJAG's work with Tribal members and groups, as referenced above. Other work will include engaging in alternative crisis responses for youth that foster partnerships between schools, agencies, youth, and families to avoid the involvement of local law enforcement.

## GOAL 2: SYSTEM CHANGES

The JJAG will leverage available federal resources to support efforts to improve system policies and procedures consistent with national best practices and recommendations in the [2020 Maine Juvenile Justice System Assessment](#). Informed by the R/ED & Gender Report, our goal is to become more present in policy guidance, allowing the expertise of board members and community input to steer our juvenile justice system. The R/ED & Gender Report will examine the state's data analysis and reporting process for juvenile justice to support more access to current data for juvenile justice stakeholders. Additionally, the study will gather community input on the various perspectives surrounding the goal to remove all youth from Long Creek Youth

Development Center as recommended by the System Assessment. By further understanding the community's perspective of Maine's Juvenile Justice system, providing professional development opportunities, enhancing Maine's data reporting and analysis capabilities, and supporting more effective accountability measures within our juvenile justice system, the initiatives underscore our inclusive community building values to reduce racial disparities, uplift inclusive practices, and engage and empower youth and families.

### **A. R/ED and Gender Data Report**

The data report will address and recommend inclusive community-building strategies to help reduce racial and ethnic disparities in the juvenile justice system. It will also assess the juvenile justice data reporting and analysis processes, including gender-specific services. Using quantitative and qualitative approaches, Maine communities and counties will be engaged to understand their needs and perspectives on our juvenile justice system. The report will inform the goals and objectives outlined in the three-year plan and others that may arise consistent with the goals and values of the JJAG.

### **B. Data Reporting Dashboard**

Develop a regularly updated juvenile justice data-reporting and analysis system, including disaggregated data on race, gender, age, and sexual orientation.

### **C. Strengthen Diversion**

Support the use of individualized strengths-based needs assessments, provide policy guidance on coordinated services and their accessibility, and develop a roadmap of existing and needed diversion programs as a component of an asset mapping tool of community resources.

**D. Transforming Community Supervision**

Support state efforts to implement reforms recommended by the Probation Transformation Certificate program and related Capstone project through the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform.

**E. Independent Oversight Council/Committee**

Consistent with System Assessment recommendations, support establishment of a state-sponsored independent oversight entity that reviews policies, procedures, practices, and outcomes of Maine youth's well-being, care/level of abuse, mental health, and quality of life should be further explored.

**F. Professional Development**

Support ongoing racial equity training and leadership development opportunities that impact system changes and reduce racial disparities among decision-makers (such as law enforcement, courts, corrections, schools, and other relevant stakeholders) who are most affected by system changes and are also integral to leading change.

**G. JJAG Strategic Placement**

Identify opportunities to expose the public and county and state governments to JJAG's expertise and capacity to provide policy guidance and to fund and support initiatives for Maine youth involved in or at risk of becoming involved in the juvenile justice system.

**GOAL 3: YOUTH ENGAGEMENT**

The JJAG will leverage available federal resources to elevate and amplify the voices of youth involved in or at risk of becoming involved in the juvenile justice system by supporting youth-focused events, establishing a database/network of youth-based organizations, and providing scholarships to system-involved youth authentically engaged in reform efforts.

### **A. Programming**

- Strengthen youth engagement by supporting a Maine Youth Summit and larger network of youth-led and youth-focused organizations.
- Improve outreach and awareness by publishing a network of youth-based organizations and related resources.

### **B. Young People's Caucus (YPC)**

- Develop a JJAG onboarding process for YPC members.
- Enhance YPC's organizational structure.

### **C. Scholarships**

- Make the \$5K Paul K. Vestal, Jr. Award available by advertising, developing an application process, and scholarship sub-committee to manage the process.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

The JJAG Three-Year Plan goals and objectives reflect our deep commitment to becoming a juvenile justice model state that upholds legislation, policy, and practices that reflect the care and guidance we dutifully write in our state Juvenile Code. We also endeavor to incorporate our values as guiding principles in funding and supporting these various initiatives as we strive to limit referrals into the youth justice system by providing robust diversion options.

Over the three years reflected in the 2024-2026 Comprehensive Juvenile Justice Plan, the JJAG will meet monthly to execute its mission and make the decisions necessary to implement the plan. At least one meeting each year will occur at Maine's only detention and commitment juvenile facility, Long Creek Youth Development Center, in South Portland, Maine. The JJAG will also develop a plan to maintain regular input

from Long Creek Youth Development Center residents and staff.

Additionally, established JJAG committees (Executive, Governance, Racial & Ethnic Disparity, Legislative & Systems Improvement) will meet regularly to develop specific tasks supporting the JJAG and the goals and objectives of the three-year plan. Some specific activities will include conducting community research as part of our system analysis, spearheading and supporting a Youth Summit, and developing a reporting dashboard that provides more up-to-date system data. We will also work to provide policy guidance to legislatures, local government agencies, and the general and continue to support the Racial and Ethnic Disparities (R/ED) Committee.

All JJAG work on the three-year plan will be informed by the R/ED Committee, which will identify and support community-based programs whose staffing decisions reflect the youth they serve. Additionally, given Maine's large rural demographic, opportunities to address the needs of rural communities in meeting the goals and objectives of the three-year plan will be a priority. Maine provides for an equitable distribution of the assistance received within the state, including rural areas. This occurs through the Regional Care Teams that help inform local entities and the state about challenges and needs throughout the state. In conjunction with youth crime analysis data, this information helps inform the funding decisions.

## **PLAN ITEMS**

The three-year plan reaffirms our dedication to seeking input from justice-involved youth through an extensive programming approach, such as organizing a Youth Summit that brings together young people from across the state in partnership with our network of youth-based organizations. The network of youth-based organizations plays a central role in the continuum of care. The JJAG will continue developing a listing of youth-based organizations to assist law enforcement agencies and attorneys make informed referrals that divert youth to available programs. To sustain these efforts, the JJAG will support the Young People's Caucus in expanding its capacity with better

onboarding tools and organizational enhancements for its members. This effort will help its members better understand their role on the JJAG and their opportunities to influence the juvenile justice system.

The JJAG will strive for the equitable distribution of award funds by ensuring the state's RFP and RFA practices are followed and allowing any entity that feels it can meet the criteria to apply.

The JJAG will use sole source awards only when the sole source has an existing infrastructure supported by other funding, benefits the JJAG's work, and assists the JJAG in completing 2021–2024 goals.

Maine will prioritize, to the extent practicable, funding programs and activities based on rigorous, systematic, and objective scientific research. DOC prioritizes disseminating evidence-based and promising practices by providing training and technical assistance to agency staff and service providers. Some projects include evaluation components; others include programmatic fidelity requirements.

The JJAG strives to coordinate with other youth-serving state agencies like DHHS, DOE, DOC, and DOC to ensure that federal funds are leveraged appropriately, and efforts are not duplicated. As described above, this happens through regular agency updates at JJAG Board Meetings and may include presentations from other agencies seeking support for needs they may have, such as training or implementation funds per a grant request activity related to the goals of the JJAG three-year plan. If the JJAG cannot fulfill the request, they may issue an RFA or RFP for competitive bids based on the request if it agrees with and meets JJAG plan Goals and Objectives as stated.

(19) Maine affirms that any assistance provided under the OJJDP Act will not cause the displacement (including a partial displacement, such as a reduction the hours of non-overtime work, wages, or employment benefits) of any currently employed employee;

activities assisted under this Act will not impair an existing collective bargaining relationship, contract for services, or collective bargaining agreement; and no such activity that would be inconsistent with the terms of a collective bargaining agreement shall be undertaken without the written concurrence of the labor organization involved.

(21 ) Maine assures that federal funds made available under this part will be used to supplement and increase (but not supplant) the level of state, local, and other non-federal funds that would be used in the absence of such federal funds made available for these programs, and will in no event replace such state, local, and other non-federal funds.

(22 B) The effectiveness of funded programs is reviewed annually by the JJAG and used to inform continuation funding decisions. Reports are submitted annually on the performance measures of subgrantees to the Administrator.

(22 C) Maine affirms that funds will not be provided to continue a program if the recipient fails to demonstrate, before the expiration of the two-year period, that the program achieved substantial success in achieving the specified goals during the preceding two-year period. Programs submit quarterly progress reports. When sub-award applications are reviewed, prior program performance is considered one of the factors for funding.

(24) Maine affirms that if the state receives under section 222 an amount that exceeds 105 percent of the amount received under this section in FY2000, all such excess would be expended through or for programs as part of a comprehensive and coordinated community system of services. Maine has compared the amount received in FY 2000 (\$579,100.00) with the amount to be received in FY22 (\$400,000.00), and the FY 22 amount does not exceed 105 percent of the FY 20 amount.



(25) No funds are being set aside in Maine, not to exceed 5% of funds received by the State under section 222 (other than funds made available to the State Advisory Group under section 222(d) that the State will reserve for expenditure by the State to provide incentive grants to units of local government.

(26) Maine affirms that to the extent possible, a system has been implemented to ensure that if a juvenile is before a court in the juvenile justice system, public child welfare records, including child protective services records, relating to that juvenile are on file in the geographical area under the jurisdiction of such court will be made known to such court. The court maintains these files and are accessible to provide the necessary services for the treatment of such victims of child abuse or neglect.

(27) Maine provides assurances that juvenile offenders whose placement is funded through section 472 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C.672) receive the protections specified in section 471 of such Act (42. U.S.C. 671) including a case plan and a review as defined in section 475 of such Act (42 U.S.C. 675).

(33) The Department of Corrections assesses sexual abuse at intake. If a youth discloses being a victim of sexual abuse, the Facility Operations Supervisor is notified, and the social workers (DOC employees) make a referral as mandated reporters. The Department of Health and Human Services does have a screening and records process for identifying victims of commercial sexual exploitation. In November 2023, the state legislature required the Department of Health and Human Services to establish an ad hoc committee to make recommendations addressing the intervention in and prevention of commercial sexual exploitation of children. [Legislation](#)

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The Maine JJAG sincerely thanks the Carter Development Group (CDG) for their expertise and guidance in developing the FY2024-26 comprehensive three-year plan. CDG's comprehensive approach to diversity, equity, and inclusion, coupled with its strategic organizational planning and human-centered expertise, was instrumental in shaping the direction of the JJAG. We appreciate their dedication to creating inclusive and equitable environments and their commitment to our success.

## RESOURCES

- [2020 Maine Juvenile Justice System Assessment Final Report and Executive Summary](#)
- [2022 Department of Public Safety Crime in Maine](#)
- [2022 MDOC Juvenile Division Overview](#)
- [2023 MDOC Juvenile Division Overview](#)
- [Alternatives to Detention and Confinement Literature Review: A Product of the Model Programs Guide](#)
- [An Initiative to Develop a Sustainable Restorative Juvenile Justice System](#)
- Appendices to the Final Report to Maine’s Juvenile Justice Advisory Group
- Blueprint for a Restorative State: Work Plan and Recommendations Presented to Maine’s Juvenile Justice Advisory Group
- Children’s Behavioral Health Services Assessment Final Report
- [Children’s Behavioral Health Services Internal Operations Report](#)
- [Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey](#)
- Maine Juvenile Justice System Assessment & Reinvestment Task Force
- [Maine Reports & Resources](#)
- The Maine Juvenile Justice Task Force: An Integrated Approach to Transforming Maine’s Juvenile Justice System
- [New York Times: ‘Shame on Us’: How Maine Struggles to Handle Troubled Youth](#)
- [Maine Center for Economic Policy: “How public policy has and hasn’t increased equity for Black Mainers](#)