



Statewide Youth Diversion Report 2025

Minority and Justice Commission Youth Justice Committee

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MJC and YJ Committee Missions

The mission of the Youth Justice Committee is to work with justice partners to focus attention, inquiry, and action on addressing bias and undoing institutional racism in the juvenile justice system and juvenile courts that allow for disparities for youth of color to persist.

MJC Youth Justice Committee Goals

Goals of the YJ Committee include developing recommendations and action steps to:

1. Expand the ways that youth can be diverted away from juvenile justice involvement.
2. Review the types and utilization of detention alternatives in Washington and leverage and increase their use beyond those achieved through the Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative (JDAI).
3. Shift the paradigm of juvenile justice from corrections/"rehabilitate" to one that is trauma informed, restorative, and positively transformative.
4. Reduce lifelong impacts of juvenile justice involvement, like debt, juvenile records, registration and other stigma.
5. Develop race equity impact tools and statements for proposed rules, guidelines, laws, and policies.

Background on Youth Diversion Report

- Tackling Youth Justice Policy Impacts as a Judicial Entity
- Report to Inform Discussion of HB 1391
- Youth Diversion from the perspective of a State practice
 - Evaluate newly published state data for equities and disparities;
 - Expanded Scope due to limitations in empirical data;
 - Develop long-term frameworks for evaluation;
 - Justice by Geography, moving away from hyper-localized standards.

What's in the 2025 Report

- Introduction
 - Glossary of YJ Committee terminologies;
- Literature Review
 - Efficacy of youth diversion on youth outcomes and public safety;
 - What other states are doing;
- Fiscal Review
 - First-of-its-kind reporting on state-level youth diversion financing;
- WSCCR Analysis of newly-published diversion data
 - Expose data limitations
- Youth Diversion Local Frameworks

Disparate Terminologies

- Utilizing terminologies as understood by YJ officials on MJC Committee
- Recognizing jurisdictions define their practices as differently as they conduct their programs.

Review: Efficacy and National Efforts

- Strong evidence for youth diversion improving both youth and public safety outcomes. The superior default response in most cases.
- Models that address root causes of behavior.
- Targeted implementation to reduce racial disparities in access and eligibility.
- Nationwide Trends

State Funding for Youth Diversion

- Overall, state contributions to diversion funding are both small and largely discretionary.
- Benefits of variety in services and opportunities
- Expansion of victim support services and broad services for youth survivors of trauma, abuse and violence.

WSSCCR Gap Analysis

- WSSCCR currently only has data on diversion agreements entered into court, either pre- or post- court filing.
- Discretionary use of this avenue is not widely observed, with referral history and severity of charge strongly predicting these diversions.
- Race and ethnic disparities exist within this data and across jurisdictions with significant variation.
- Jurisdictions with highest certainty of racial disparities are recommended for priority research.

Diversion Frameworks

- Goal: categorize different organizational structures of various diversion programs for future comparative research.
- Provided examples of four (plus one) frameworks:
 1. Community Accountability Board (CAB)
 2. Probation Counselor Diversion
 3. Community Partnered Diversion
 4. Community Diversion
 5. Additional Framework: School-Based Diversion

Recommendations

- Three Broad Categories of Recommendations:
 - Research;
 - Reform;
 - Investment.

Recommendations – Research

1. Establish dedicated research at WSCCR (check!)
2. In-depth analysis of sites identified for further inquiry of racial differences in formal diversion.
3. Develop Necessary Data Infrastructure

Recommendations – Research

4. Identify and Catalog all variations of diversion program frameworks
5. Comparative research of different program frameworks
6. Investigate opportunities for collaboration and promotion of school-based and other upstream diversion programs

Recommendations – Reform

7. Reduce barriers to accessing funds for community-based diversion programs by modifying the ‘evidence-based’ and ‘promising program’ requirements within the Juvenile Justice Block Grant.

Recommendations – Reform

8. Support the increased need for victim support roles and services, and supports for all youth survivors of trauma, abuse and violence.

Recommendations – Investment

9. Fund community-based providers (CBPs) directly to engage in pre-filing diversion and concrete services.
 - Expand eligibility for CBPs under Block Grant
10. Invest in statewide compensation and restitution fund, and specialized services.

What's Next for WA Diversion Research

- Implementation of HB 1391
- Research collaboration and priorities from legislature and other stakeholders

Questions?

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