

## **PROPOSAL #2**

**New York State Juvenile Justice Advisory Group**  
**Recommendation for Action:** March 8, 2022

### **Community Build and Restoration with Erie County Restorative Justice Coalition**

**Proposed Grant Recipient: Erie County Restorative Justice Coalition**

**Proposed Funding Amount:** \$50,000

#### **Overview:**

Restorative justice practices are evidence-based practices to repair harm and improve outcomes for kids and communities. Restorative practices intentionally integrate principles of trauma-informed care to advance emotional health and well-being by building neighborhood social capital and equipping neighborhoods to organize based on community needs. Considerable overlap exists between trauma informed care principles (safety; trustworthiness and transparency; collaboration; peer support; empowerment, voice, and choice; and cultural, historical, and gender issues) and the principles of restorative practices (safety; collaboration; repairing harm; emotional healing; the inclusion of all voices as equals). Often restorative justice practices are embedded in specific youth serving settings, e.g., schools, probation departments and to some extent the court system. While some restorative practices done utilizing community-based organizations, they have rarely been facilitated by individuals who live in the community where events occur.

This grant would be used to support an innovative practice of embedding restorative practices in the community by training members in restorative justice practices in cities where young people are entering the youth justice system. This grant will develop a trained network of community members, organizations, businesses, and municipalities to address issues that most impacts them through restorative practices. The Erie County Restorative Justice Coalition will serve as a hub for community training as well as utilizing community trained individuals for cases with restorative circles and practices that need to be completed. The Coalition is also well rooted and steeped in their community, including schools, with a widespread knowledge of community partners and need. The residential areas and youth to be targeted will include the project targets areas with the highest racial health disparities. Through education, training, and hands-on experience, funding will support key community members to facilitate restorative dialogue to create and implement plans for sustainable community change. If this pilot is successful, it is the intent to find ways to scale this programming to other parts of New York State. This project directly relates to the JJAG's strategy, goals, and action steps outlined in the 2021 NYS JJAG Strategic Plan by addressing the following areas:

- Support Efficient Coordination, Alignment, and Delivery of Services that Reflect the Priorities of State Agencies and the Partnership for Youth Justice throughout New York State: Highlight successful practices and encourage the use of new tools and practices to increase system effectiveness and measure outcomes.
- Establish and Implement Youth Justice Policy Priorities: Effectively and proactively serve all youth who encounter the youth justice system, while placing an enhanced focus on prevention and the following priority areas.

- Enhance Positive Youth, Family, and Community Impacts and Outcomes: Partner with youth, families, and communities in youth justice system work to improve outcomes and create meaningful connections for positive outcomes.
- Procedural Justice at All System Points: Integrate procedural justice best practices integrating fairness to and dignity of youth and families in the work of youth justice professionals at all system points.

This site uses conflict mediation and a restorative approach, while being trauma informed to serve at-risk and system involved youth (justice and child welfare). Participants are often high-risk youth, youth of color, and those with higher suspension rates. While the Erie County Restorative Justice Coalition has deep connections within the community and system partners, their partnership with school districts is crucial in effectuating change for these youth.

Anticipated deliverables include:

1. Increase number of community champions to participate in comprehensive community-wide restorative approach that leads to improving the health and wellness of residents within marginalized communities that disproportionately experience high rates of trauma.
2. Convene virtual meetings each month with community members/champions present to reach the neighborhoods and additional community partners vital to actualizing the vision
3. Increase opportunity for training in restorative circles

#### **Justification:**

Both the OJJDP Title II application and JJAG strategic plan speak to the need for prevention services, building community trust, addressing trauma, healing, and behavioral health with a focus on reducing racial and ethnic disparities. This project will continue to build capacity in conflict resolution and restorative practices in New York State while utilizing unspent funds set to expire in September 2022 and addressing each of the program focuses listed above. If this project is successful, the Office of Youth Justice would look to support other mechanisms for spreading this across the state as it builds New York State's commitment to evidence-based programming.

#### **Recommended Action:**

Authorize \$50,000 for DCJS support to support Erie County Restorative Justice Coalition in its effort to bring healing, trust, and conflict reduction to their community.