

CAMPAIGN FOR  
**YOUTH JUSTICE**

BECAUSE THE CONSEQUENCES AREN'T MINOR

January 2009 Newsletter

The Campaign for Youth Justice is a national organization dedicated to ending the practice of trying, sentencing, and incarcerating youth under the age of 18 in the adult criminal justice system.

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**ACROSS THE COUNTRY**

**A Message from the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance, CFYJ Partner**

Dear Friends of the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance,

Bernard Madoff did not just cheat a bunch of high rollers who should have known better. He cheated some of the most vulnerable kids in our state, the kids for whom we

advocate here at the Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance. The JEHT Foundation, a long-term significant funder of CTJJA, had its assets with Madoff, who is accused of operating the largest "Ponzi" scheme in history. Madoff also controlled funds for the Rokit Foundation, which supported our lobbying activities. We will receive no money from JEHT or Rokit in 2009, a year when our Raise the Age victory is threatened by the state budget crisis. We also have important work to do advocating for better school communities, services for girls, racial equality in the system and many more vital issues.

For more about our 2009 priorities, see:

[www.sayyesct.org](http://www.sayyesct.org)

For more on the Raise the Age Campaign, see:

[www.raisetheagect.org](http://www.raisetheagect.org)

Our kids seem to get punished over and over again for the bad financial decisions of adults. We're not OK with that, and we hope you aren't either. Make no mistake: We are here to stay. We have already received encouragement from other supporters and are looking at creative ways to make the most of our resources. It's critical that we go into 2009 well equipped to protect the gains juvenile justice reform has made in Connecticut. We're asking people like you to help us.

Please consider making a donation in honor of someone - or simply as one more way of affirming your own commitment to fair treatment for all of Connecticut's children. Whatever your reason, whatever the size of your gift, we can assure you that it will be deeply appreciated and will do a world of good for the children who need it most.

You can donate online at [www.ctjja.org](http://www.ctjja.org). (The make a donation button is at the bottom left.) If it's more comfortable for you, feel free to send a check to:

Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance  
2470 Fairfield Ave.  
Bridgeport, CT 06605

With best wishes for a healthy and prosperous new year,

Abby Anderson  
Alliance Co-Chair

Robert Francis  
Alliance Co-Chair

Christine Rapillo  
Executive Director

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## **National and Connecticut Groups: Sign On Now to Implement Raise the Age Legislation**

The Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance (CTJJA) has created a resolution in order for state and national organizations to support the implementation of the state's "Raise the Age" legislation. Currently, Connecticut is one of only three states in the nation that tries all 16- and 17-year-olds as adults no matter what the offense. In 2007, the Connecticut General Assembly passed legislation to raise the age of juvenile jurisdiction and end the automatic prosecution of 16- and 17-year-old youth in the adult criminal justice system, effective January 1, 2010.

CTJJA's resolution calls for the bill to be implemented properly to ensure the intended benefits for Connecticut's youth. It asks the legislature to fully fund the bill, which cannot succeed unless the juvenile justice system has adequate resources for this new population. It asks that the bill be implemented on time and not delayed any further than the two-year transition period that is in place. Finally, it asks the legislature to support balanced and restorative justice for youth in the juvenile justice system, such as personal accountability, competency development, and community protection.

If implemented successfully, the new age of jurisdiction in Connecticut will improve public safety, increase services for youth, and save taxpayer money in the long run. If your organization would like to sign on to the resolution, or if you have any further questions, please contact Ian Augarten at [iaugarten@cfyj.org](mailto:iaugarten@cfyj.org) or 202.558.3580x15.

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## **A Journey to North Dakota**



*I see my mother just as I picture heaven  
I couldn't of ever asked for a better Christmas present  
With my family's love and holiday cheer  
I've not seen my mother in the last two years*

*Today is the day that means the most in life  
To hug my folk and hold them tight  
Feels like I'm high above the sky in the cloud  
All I want is to make my mother proud*

These are the words of Jermaine, a Washington, D.C. youth who was sentenced as an adult and is serving time in a juvenile facility in Devil's Lake, North Dakota. His mother and sister as well as five other D.C. families joined a team from the Campaign for Youth Justice on a journey to the Roughrider State last December. The Campaign sponsored the trip in order to reunite families with their loved ones who are incarcerated 1,500 miles from home. Thousands of incarcerated D.C. residents find themselves in far corners of the country with limited contact with their family and friends, which can be particularly difficult over the holidays.

The travelers encountered many obstacles on their voyage. Flights were delayed and cancelled, shuttles took people to the wrong airports, and North Dakota was in the middle of a blizzard, with temperatures hovering at minus 40 degrees. These conditions didn't stop the trek to see eight D.C. youth.

After arriving at the Lake Region Law Enforcement Center, family and staff spent about nine hours with the youth in a large room. It was an emotional day for everyone. Some kids hadn't seen their family in almost two years. Family members were laughing, crying, taking pictures, and most importantly, spending quality time with their sons.



The visiting parents and family members as well as the CFYJ team on the trip learned about

the facility and the programs it offered. We at CFYJ are investigating the bigger issue of why D.C. youth are sent so far from home. Our hope is that this trip can result in changes to federal and local policies that will end the practice of incarcerating DC youth far from home.

Jermaine's mother, Keela, had many thoughts going through her head after reuniting with her son. Her words summarize the emotional journey to Devil's Lake, North Dakota.

*Hugging my son after two years  
there was absolutely no way that I could contain the tears.  
I know that he always hates to see me cry  
and although I really tried my best, the emotion refused to die.  
So here we are today after traveling very far  
by cab, by shuttle, by plane, I dare not part my lips and complain.  
It was all so very worth it to hug my son again.*



To read more about this trip, please view the *Washington Post* story at:

<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/12/26/AR2008122601972.html>

To read more poetry from the parent and family visit to Devil's Lake, North Dakota, see the "Voices" column below.

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### **Wisconsin Governor's Juvenile Justice Committee Endorses Returning 17-Year-Olds to the Juvenile System**

The Wisconsin Governor's Juvenile Justice Commission has unanimously endorsed

returning 17-year-olds to the juvenile justice system. Following a presentation by Wisconsin Council on Children and Families (WCCF), Wisconsin County Human Services Association (WCHSA), and the Sheriff's Association, the Committee took up the issue formally for the first time in December. In their statement regarding age of jurisdiction, the Commission endorsed the following conclusions and recommendations:

~The Commission supports legislation that would raise the age of general adult criminal jurisdiction to 18 as the sole modification of Chapter 938.

~The Commission endorses a balanced approach to juvenile justice.

~The Commission recommends that this change be contingent on the provision of sufficient fiscal resources to the affected entities.

The full statement by the Commission, including their reasoning for endorsing the change and more specifics on their conclusions and recommendations, can be found at the WCCF website:

[http://www.wccf.org/pdf/commission\\_statement\\_17-year%20olds\\_091108.pdf](http://www.wccf.org/pdf/commission_statement_17-year%20olds_091108.pdf).

This is the second Governor's Commission to endorse returning 17-year-olds to the juvenile justice system. The Governor's Commission on Reducing Racial Disparities in the Wisconsin Justice System endorsed this policy change last February.

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### **DC Transfer Legislation to be Reintroduced in 2009**

With the start of a new year comes the start of a new legislative session in the DC Council. This session, the Council welcomes its newest member, Michael A. Brown (I-At Large), who is replacing Councilmember Carol Schwartz (R-At Large).

In the upcoming weeks and months, CFYJ will be working with Councilmember Phil Mendelson (D-At Large) to reintroduce legislation focusing on reducing the prosecution of DC youth as adults and ensuring that youth prosecuted as adults in DC are housed at a safe, age-appropriate location. The legislation will likely be similar to legislation introduced in the last Council session, Bill 17-913, the Juvenile Justice Improvement Amendment Act of 2008. In addition, we are planning to tour the new facility where DC youth prosecuted as adults are being held.

Action Items: As the new Council begins its work, we encourage D.C. residents to contact your Councilmember by phone or e-mail and express support for a bill that supports judicial discretion on decisions of whether to prosecute youth as adults in the District. Contact information for each Councilmember can be found at this link:

<http://www.dccouncil.us/>.

We particularly encourage you to contact members of the Council's Judiciary Committee; a

list of these Members can be found at this link:

<http://www.dccouncil.us/councilorganization>.

## FROM THE HILL



### **The New Administration Settles In**

On January 20, 2009, Barack Obama was sworn in as our nation's 44th President. In President Obama's first weeks, much of the focus has been on the economy. Additionally, President Obama has begun appointing key individuals to various positions in the Cabinet to head up federal agencies. For a complete list of appointments, please visit:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/administration/cabinet/>.

For juvenile justice advocates, all eyes are on key appointments at the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ). President Obama has nominated Eric Holder to be Attorney General, the top position at DOJ. Mr. Holder was approved by the Senate Judiciary Committee Wednesday, January 28. The committee vote was 17 to 2, supporting the nomination of Mr. Holder to head the Department of Justice. His final approval as the nation's 82nd attorney general is pending confirmation in the full Senate.

Advocates will also be on the watch for other key picks by the Obama Administration, including who will be chosen to head the Office of Justice Programs and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. The individuals chosen to head these offices will play major roles in shaping the juvenile justice agenda for the new Administration.

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### **JJDPA Reauthorization Groups Reorganized and Back to Work**

The new year brings with it the 111th Congress! There are new Members on each of the authorizing Committees for the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJJPA).

Three Members have joined the Senate Judiciary Committee: Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), Ted Kaufman (D-DE), and Ron Wyden (D-OR). Unfortunately, a long-time friend and ally of the juvenile justice world, Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA), is stepping down from the Senate Judiciary Committee to focus on healthcare reform. Also leaving the Committee is Senator Sam Brownback (R-KS) and now-Vice President Joe Biden (D-DE). More information on the Senate Judiciary Committee can be found at this link:

<http://judiciary.senate.gov/>.

The House Education and Labor Committee has 11 new Members: Rep. Bill Cassidy (R-LA), Rep. Marcia Fudge (D-OH), Rep. Brett Guthrie (R-KY), Rep. Duncan Hunter (R-CA), Rep. Tom McClintock (R-CA), Rep. Pedro Pierluisi (D-PR), Rep. Jared Polis (D-CO), Rep.

Phil Roe (R-TN), Del. Gregorio Sablan (D-Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands), Rep. Dina Titus (D-NV), and Rep. Paul Tonko (D-NY). Another long-time juvenile justice friend, Rep. Danny Davis (D-IL), has left the Committee and taken a slot on the coveted House Ways and Means Committee. More information on the House Education and Labor Committee can be found at this link:

<http://edlabor.house.gov/>.

To find your representatives in the U.S. House of Representatives, please visit the page below and enter your zip code in the "Find Your Representative" feature in the upper right hand corner of the page:

<http://www.house.gov/>.

Action items: As the 111th Congress begins its work, it will be crucial to have you as constituents weighing in with your Senators and Representatives and urging them to pass a strong reauthorization of the JJDPAs as quickly as possible.

We encourage you to contact your Senators and Representative and convey the importance of a strong, swift JJDPAs reauthorization. For more information on how the JJDPAs can be strengthened this Congress, please visit:

[www.act4jj.org](http://www.act4jj.org).

Continue to watch our newsletter for regular updates on Congressional legislation and for additional ways that you can help advance the JJDPAs in the 111th Congress!

## RESEARCH AND POLICY

### **Texas Releases Report on Youth Tried as Adults**

The Office of the Independent Ombudsman for the Texas Youth Commission released a new report highlighting the increase in youth being tried as adults. The report shares why the researchers believe the increase has occurred and makes recommendations for solutions to solve the problem. The report shows the consequences of locking up children as adults and reminds the reader of the high rate of recidivism of youth incarcerated as adults, rather than being treated under the guidelines of the juvenile justice system.

According to the report there is a very bleak outlook for these children: "Children serving sentences in adult prisons, as compared to children in the juvenile justice system, are five times more likely to be sexually victimized, eight times more likely to commit suicide, and twice as likely to be attacked with a weapon or beaten by corrections officers." In the past year, there has been an increase of 30.9% children standing trial as adults. Texas has begun the reform process but as with all reform, advocates must stay involved and engaged as new problems surface.

## MEDIA WRAP

### ***Juvenile Justice Matters: The Update***

*Juvenile Justice Matters* can be heard live every Thursday at 4:30 p.m. EST. Here's a summary of shows from this past month:

January 8 - Shay Bilchik, former Director of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and current Director of the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform and Systems Integration at the Georgetown Public Policy Institute discusses the evolving reforms in the juvenile justice system.

January 15 - Tamar Birkhead, UNC Law Professor and juvenile justice researcher, has recently been featured in the media discussing North Carolina's "Raise the Age" campaign.

January 22 - Shannon Wight of the Partnership for Safety and Justice in Oregon and Jason Zeidenberg, criminologist and Communications and Policy Advisor for the Department of Community Justice in Multnomah County, Oregon discuss juvenile transfer in Oregon and the recent resolution passed in Multnomah County to remove youth from adult jails.

Listen live to *Juvenile Justice Matters* February 5 and every Thursday at 4:30 p.m. EST at: [www.blogtalkradio.com/jjmatters](http://www.blogtalkradio.com/jjmatters).

If you miss the show, you can download it later from Blog Talk Radio or from the CFYJ site:

<http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/radio.html>

## GET ORGANIZED

A Monthly Column by Grace Bauer

### **Strategies for Engaging Families in Advocacy and System Reform Efforts**

We've outlined 6 strategies for engaging parents in your state's reform efforts. If you need help in engaging families, call us at the Campaign and let us know. We are here to help you in your reform efforts, especially when it comes to including the voices and concerns of families and parents.

1. *Invite parents, other family and community members to the table.* This may seem obvious, but it is

surprising how often these groups are simply not invited. Admittedly, it is tough to hear the anger and hurt of families. When they tell their stories, especially about what their experience with the system has been, it's not a personal attack on anyone, and you shouldn't take it as one. The only thing that's personal, in fact, is the story they are being brave enough to share with you - and that is very personal to them. Instead of getting defensive, use the opportunity to understand the experiences of the family.

2. *Recognize multiple forms of meaningful engagement.* Some families will be most interested in the work because their child is involved in the system and they will come with a great deal of raw personal experience and pain. Some may be interested regardless of their child's status. Still others may be interested for either of these reasons but have no time or ability for whatever reason to come to a meeting. Wherever they are, physically or emotionally, there can be meaningful engagement between parents and other system reformers if everyone understands that input and engagement can happen in many different ways, not just at professional meetings.

*Consider* sending newsletters and ask for submissions from folks who can't or don't want to come to meetings. Make check-in calls to say hello. A phone call from a caring family advocate offering assistance in meeting a need or listening to a tired mother would make more sense and gain greater results. The advocate can then get meaningful input by asking questions about how a specific program is meeting the needs of the child and family or if the process for reporting a complaint is worth the effort.

3. *Level the playing field.* Many advocates feel that they sit in on an awful lot of meetings, often underpaid. Maybe you're one of them. For most families, system reform is not the only priority and it certainly doesn't pay the bills. If your organization wants family involvement and honestly believes parents and families are as important as the other stakeholders, you must level the playing field whether through stipends or at least funds to cover transportation, lost time at work, childcare costs, food and other financial hardships. Think about the time of day you hold your stakeholder meetings and where you hold these meetings. Do the times work for the families you want involved or just the professionals? Are they held near the neighborhoods of the families or uptown near your offices?

*Consider* offering stipends to the parents/families involved in your work as a meaningful way to keep them active and engaged.

4. *Make the table more parent/community friendly.* We all use different language in our daily lives and professions. The same is true of our organizations, we all come from different places and have different levels of understanding.

*Consider:* creating guidelines to bridge the differences and possibly getting all of the stakeholders to agree early on a set of guidelines can help facilitate this process.

5. *Set clear expectations.* What do you want from families and community members? When you hear their truths are you going to act to remedy certain obstacles faced by families? Will they truly be equal partners and decision makers? Advocacy organizations must be willing to share their vision of what a reformed system looks like and where families and

parents fit into it. If this vision doesn't meet the needs of families, are you willing to consider what it will take to do so?

*Consider* that if you spent several hours a week or month in a meeting, sharing your ideas and thoughts on any given subject and those views were never given credence, you probably would not continue showing up at those meetings for very long. Given the time constraints we all face in our busy lives, it is not very likely that we would waste our precious time filing complaints that make no difference.

6. *Be an apprentice to first-hand experience.* No one knows what it is like to struggle with a child in the system better than another parent. Advocacy groups may not be the best leaders for parents. Many parents come to the system with distrust of the system already firmly ingrained in their mind. For many communities this distrust is well founded. Don't expect families or community members to automatically put trust in a system that has failed them before. Don't patronize families; they know when they are being patronized. Don't make assumptions about these families; you may know very little about their day-to-day lives and their struggles. You may know what their household income is, but that doesn't tell you about their work ethic. You may know what community they live in, but you may not know why they live there, if by choice or by circumstance. Never underestimate their strengths, capacity or abilities. Support the creation of family networks or fund family centered organizations to bridge some of these gaps.

*Consider* hiring a parent advocate as part of your team to support the parents who are new to your organization.

Don't waste the opportunities that you now have in reforming your juvenile justice system. You must make a choice and be committed to having families, youth and community involved. It takes strategic thinking, planning and hard work, but in empowering families to be a part of system reform you are ensuring a long lasting legacy of true reform in your jurisdictions.

## VOICES

Below, as promised, are some additional poems written by the D.C. youth incarcerated in North Dakota on the occasion of the visit by their parents and families on December 20, 2008.

### **What Does this Mean To Me?**

By M.

This visit has been the best day since I've been locked up  
Just to hug Grandma and feel Ma's touch

I never knew people outside my family could care so much  
So thank you for everybody being able to make this happen  
This is the best present  
and it didn't need wrapping!

### **Picture**

By J.

In times of joy you look past the trial and tribulations  
Just to know my mother would fly 1000 miles  
to see her child in visitation

I see my mother just as I picture heaven  
I couldn't of ever asked for a better Christmas present  
With my family's love and holiday cheer  
I've not seen my mother in the last two years

Today is the day that means the most in life  
To hug my folk and hold them tight  
Feels like I'm high above the sky in the cloud  
All I want is to make my mother proud

Woman in my life that I'll 4 ever respect  
Today is a day I'll never 4-get  
She helps me get through every obstacle  
Without all you people this wouldn't be possible  
So happy to see my mother and sister elated  
Just know you are appreciated

### **Missing Love**

By A. and his mom, K.

It's been quite sometime  
Since we've seen one another

Once again reunited  
Not feeling slighted  
By the time and touch

But still not enough  
Looking forward to better days

We both have to get on our knees and pray  
Holding on to faith  
Reality will replace

## CFYJ WELCOMES NEW FELLOWS

Jennifer Comer will be working part-time at CFYJ with Neelum Arya as a research fellow. Originally from Pittsburgh, Jen is working on her master's degree in forensic psychology from Marymount University.

Amanda Ponce joins CFYJ on a public policy fellowship from the Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute (CHCI). Hailing from Omaha, Nebraska, Amanda graduated from the University of Nebraska, Lincoln, with a bachelor's degree in political science. She came to Washington, D.C. in August and spent the first part of her fellowship working as a legislative fellow for Representative Hilda Solis (D-CA), learning about juvenile justice reform and many other issues. Amanda now joins CFYJ as a policy fellow under Erin Davies.

## GET IN THE ACTION WITH CFYJ

**Listen** to *Juvenile Justice Matters* radio show at: [www.blogtalkradio.com/jjmatters](http://www.blogtalkradio.com/jjmatters) or download from [www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/radio.html](http://www.campaignforyouthjustice.org/radio.html).

**Call in** to the show with questions at (347) 843-4360.

### **Join**

the Campaign for Youth Justice group on Facebook and connect with hundreds of advocates across the country at:

<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=22937084155&ref=ts>.

**Visit** the Campaign's YouTube channel at:

<http://www.youtube.com/user/jjreform>.

**Read** JJ Today, Youth Today's blog on juvenile justice at:

[www.youthtoday.org/jtoday](http://www.youthtoday.org/jtoday).