

Overview

The Queens Community Justice Center (formerly the Queens Youth Justice Center) works with people both in and outside the justice system, providing a range of supportive services and opportunities for civic engagement for people of all ages. For justice involved clients, the Justice Center's holistic approach seeks to prevent the negative consequences that often accompany contact with the criminal legal system while addressing clients' needs in order to prevent future system involvement. The Justice Center also provides young people with leadership training, internships, and opportunities to make a positive contribution to the Queens community.

Alternatives to Incarceration for Adults

The Queens Community Justice Center provides community-based diversion and sentencing options to reduce the use of incarceration and criminal convictions for people charged with low-level offenses. As part of their engagement, participants may be mandated to social services to address underlying issues, such as substance use disorder, mental illness, unemployment, and trauma. Comprehensive case management, individual and group counseling, and workforce development are available, as well as linkages to longer-term services and offsite referrals for social service needs. Participants may be assigned to community service projects where they can engage in online content and take part in group discussions on the criminal justice system and mass incarceration, facilitated by program staff, or work with community-based organizations to provide relief to isolated and vulnerable community members.

Alternatives to Detention for Youth

The Queens Community Justice Center's QUEST alternative-to-detention program offers young people, ages 11 to 17 years old, charged with delinquency a community-based trauma-

informed alternative to detention. The Justice Center provides young people family support, case management, educational advocacy, and recreational afterschool activities and restorative programming. The Justice Center furnishes Family Court judges with timely updates about compliance. Youth who complete the program are more likely to avoid placement in detention and receive community-based dispositions than those who are detained.

Forging New Leaders: Youth Impact

Youth Impact invites teenagers from across Queens to become transformative leaders. The Justice Center provides members with paid internships, where they provide peer-led diversion to keep young people out of the criminal legal system. They also develop and pilot community projects to address the underlying issues that can cause youth contact with the legal system. Queens Youth Impact operates two programs:

- **Queens Youth Court:** trains local teenagers to serve as jurors, judges, and advocates, who handle real-life cases involving their peers. Grounded in restorative justice

principles, youth court uses positive peer pressure to ensure that young people who have committed minor offenses learn accountability and repair the harm caused by their actions. The program receives referrals from schools, the New York Police Department, the New York City Department of Probation, and the New York City Law Department.

- **Neighborhood Youth Justice Council:** provides a platform for youth to participate meaningfully in justice-related policymaking and problem-solving to address local challenges. Working collaboratively with community, justice and law enforcement partners, council members identify and research issues, generate potential solutions, and work to implement positive change.

Mentoring: Intensive Community Monitoring Plus Program

Run in collaboration with the Department of Probation, the Intensive Community Monitoring Plus Program provides youth assigned to probation from family court with mentoring services. Staff serve as mentors, using an evidence-based curriculum, to provide one-on-one support, advice, and guidance to help young people develop the skills to enhance interpersonal relationships, achieve academic and employment success, and become more engaged with their communities.

Service Learning

All young people at the Queens Community Justice Center can participate in ongoing community service learning projects that aim to benefit community members, deepen civic attachments, and create leadership opportunities for youth. For example, the Community Justice Center works in partnership with Jamaica Center BID (Business Improvement District) and the New York Restoration Project for community beautification projects and to maintain and manage local community gardens.

Trauma-Informed Clinical Services

All participants receive ongoing case

management informed by evidence-based tools shown to promote positive growth and change, including validated screening and assessment, social-emotional learning approaches, motivational interviewing techniques, and evidence-based treatment groups. Enhanced ATD Services offers additional services for justice-involved adolescents with unaddressed mental health needs and their families.

Family Engagement and Support

In collaboration with the New York City Department of Probation, parent coaches—many of whom have personal experience with the justice system—assist the families of justice involved youth. They help parents and families understand and navigate the juvenile justice system, offering monthly parent support groups and one-on-one emotional support. Although this specific program is provided to parents whose youth are on probation, the Justice Center's staff incorporate family engagement and support in all of our programming.

Gender-specific Programming

In partnership with SOUL Sisters, the Community Justice Center's TEAM Sisterhood focuses on leadership development, healing, social justice and the arts using restorative, trauma-informed, and gender-specific practices. Over the course of the program, the girls, femmes, and non-binary youth may use theater, spoken word, film, and photography, among other art forms to explore issues impacting young people of color. TEAM Brotherhood, a violence prevention program, educates boys on healthy, respectful relationships. Workshops are designed to help participants put aside preconceptions of what it means to be a man and to connect to themselves and one-another from a place of authenticity and respect.

Services for Sexually Exploited Youth

The Queens Community Justice Center provides specialized direct support and mentoring services to young people ages 12 to 18 who are survivors of or at risk of sexual exploitation/domestic sex trafficking. A social worker and case manager work one-on-one and in group

settings, providing intensive case management and trauma-informed, survivor-centered support services, including mentoring when appropriate.

Workforce Development

The Community Justice Center operates various workforce development initiatives, for youth, both those who have completed their court mandates and those who are not justice involved. In partnership with the Department of Probation, ECHOES Be Ready and Works Plus programming offers young adults weekly workshops geared to develop skills ranging from resume writing to public speaking, while also engaging in service learning projects and internships that allow them to use the skills they learned.

For More Information

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