Queens Community Justice Center

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Overview

The Queens Community Justice Center (Justice Center) works to create a safer, more equitable Queens through community-driven public safety initiatives, youth opportunity, and economic mobility efforts. The Justice Center provides a range of supportive services and opportunities for civic engagement for people of all ages.

For court involved participants, the Justice Center's holistic approach seeks to prevent the negative consequences that often accompany contact with the criminal legal system while addressing participants' needs to prevent future system involvement. The Justice Center provides young people with a diverse array of youth development initiatives. By offering positive, pro-social activities, and pathways to education, employment, and healing the Justice Center supports youth in building strong futures, increasing safety and preventing crime.

Alternatives to Incarceration for Adults

The 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, 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.

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.

Mentoring

Run in collaboration with the Department of Probation, the ARCHES program provides one-on- one mentoring and group support for young people between the ages of 16 and 24 living in Queens. Mentees are paired with a Mentor that supports their growth and development throughout the duration of the program. The Plus+ Mentoring 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.

Workforce Development

The Queens Community Justice Center works towards healing and the redefinition of possibility for young people through various workforce development initiatives, for youth and young adults, both those who have completed their court mandates and those who are not justice involved. In partnership with the Department of Probation, 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. Focus Forward provides employment-focused services as an alternative to incarceration or as an enhancement to probation mandates. The program serves young adults ages 18 to 35 with employment needs. Focus Forward uses evidence- based programming to help participants obtain and maintain employment, while offering case management support to assist them in pursuing long-term career goals. Justice Center employment programs provide paid internships and create employment pipelines.

Trauma-Informed Clinical Services

All participants receive ongoing case management informed by evidence-based tools shown to promote positive growth and change, including screening and assessment, social- emotional learning approaches, motivational interviewing techniques, and evidence-based treatment groups. Clinical programs include Uplift, a trauma and healing program for young men who have

been exposed to violence with a special focus on individuals in the legal system, Queens HOPE, a specialized direct support and mentoring program for young people who are survivors of or are at risk of sexual exploitation and Functional Family Therapy (FFT) to families in Queens. FFT is a short-term, evidence- based family counseling service. FFT works with a young person's entire family and extrafamilial influences to facilitate growth and development.

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, all staff incorporate family engagement and support in all of our programming.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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