

Upstate New York Overview

The Center for Justice Innovation's Upstate New York office centers safety and racial justice in partnership with communities, courts, and the people most impacted. Located in Onondaga County, the Center works in criminal, civil, and community settings to identify local challenges and build programs to address those challenges, while sharing what is learned with justice systems, governments, and communities.

The Center works to identify gaps in services, by conducting needs assessments including convening and facilitating resident-led Kitchen Table Talks, direct street outreach to engage community members, implementing resident-led participatory budgeting and community research projects, participating in local stakeholder coalitions and workgroups, and working with local community data reports and platforms; provide training and technical assistance, and help communities find strengths-based solutions to common issues of crime and safety. The Center's current initiatives include:

Problem-Solving Justice

The Center assists with the planning, development, implementation, and enhancement of a number of court-based initiatives, including developing problem-solving courts in Syracuse, NY.

Emerging Adult Domestic Violence Court

This is a specialized court addressing Intimate Partner Violence with defendants 18-25 years old. The Emerging Adults Domestic Violence Court is part of the Syracuse City Court presiding over misdemeanor level crimes involving Intimate Partner Violence. Case Management services are provided in collaboration with Center for Community Alternatives and Victim Advocacy is offered by Vera House.

This program includes facilitating a Coordinated Community Response Team, which focuses on building relationships with and between community partners such as Vera House, the Syracuse Area Salvation Army, and stakeholders within the criminal justice system.

Community Development

The Community Development team works to promote housing justice and improve public safety by engaging residents, building coalitions among city government and non-profit partners, and holding property owners accountable for safe, secure homes. Community Development programming include creative placemaking work, community events, Kitchen Table Talks, and the Community Ambassador Program, which helps tenants learn their rights and responsibilities and effectively navigate code enforcement services.

The program employs trusted members of Syracuse neighborhoods to advocate for housing justice and investment in Syracuse's diverse neighborhoods. Community Ambassadors are highly trained and uniquely qualified to conduct outreach, educate Syracuse residents on their rights and responsibilities, and facilitate connections between residents and offices of city government. The program focuses outreach with renters who have concerns about the safety of their housing and have been unsuccessful in resolving issues with their landlord. Ambassadors help to facilitate inspections and improve accountability by partnering with the city's Department of Code Enforcement.

Restorative Justice

When there is a dispute or conflict, restorative justice seeks to repair and restore, instead of focusing on punishment. The Youth Restorative Justice program works with youth and young adults in the community and those who are within the Hillbrook Juvenile Detention Center.

The Youth Restorative Justice program uses trained Restorative Circle Facilitators to help resolve conflict for justice-involved youth. The program aims to rebuild relationships between youth, their families, peers, schools, and law enforcement, offering a constructive alternative to traditional punitive discipline. The program fosters social-emotional skills, self-awareness, and problem-solving through restorative practices and evidenced-based youth development curriculums. Youth are referred to the program by Onondaga County's Department of Child and Family Services, Family Court, and other community partners.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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