UPDATE ON SCHOOL-BASED ARRESTS TASK FORCE

Deputy Chief (DC) Greg Gonzalez attended the Operation Youth Success (OYS) February School-Based Arrest Task Force meeting and provided us with an Omaha Police Department (OPD) School Resource Office and School Safety Overview. OPD School Resource Officers (SROs) are in 12 High Schools and 19 Middle Schools in 4 School Districts: Omaha Public Schools (*53,194 total students), Millard Public Schools (*24,104 total students), Elkhorn Public Schools (*9,857 total students), and District 66 (*5,942 total students). The role of an OPD SRO calls for balance between school safety and criminalizing juvenile behavior, and they have been praised for keeping the peace in schools and for de-escalating potentially dangerous situations.

DC Gonzalez provided some of the following data numbers:

From the 2015/16 school year compared to the 2018/19 school year, Omaha SRO Counts for Misdemeanors have decreased 91% and for Felonies have decreased 27%.

Omaha SRO Counts for Misdemeanors in 2018/19 school year compared to 2017/18 school year by type: Misdemeanor Assaults decreased 52%, Disorderly Conduct decreased 53%, Other Misdemeanors decreased 76%.

He also informed us about the Douglas County Threat Advisory Team, which is a multi-disciplinary team looking at best practices and includes school district administration, law enforcement, mental health experts, juvenile justice system professionals and other school-safety stakeholders. The Team has developed the Safe2Help Nebraska Anonymous Reporting System which was implemented in January 2020. The Safe2Help NE Fusion Center is operated 24/7 by Boys Town trained counselors. Tip reporting can be done by App, web site www.safe2helpne.org, and phone 531-299-SAFE (7233). The top three reported student concerns since implementation are bullying (includes cyber-bullying), suicide and drugs.

Thank you Deputy Chief Gonzalez for the information and discussion.

*Data from the Nebraska Department of Education: www.nep.education.ne.gov
JUVENILE JUSTICE PROVIDER FORUM PRESENTATIONS

On January 27, 2020, Operation Youth Success held the Juvenile Justice Provider Forum Knowledge Exchange at the Douglas/Sarpy County Extension Office located at 8015 W. Center Road. This is a quarterly forum, open to all providers who would like to attend, to share with others and learn what others in the community are doing.

OYS invited two presenters to the January Forum to share with us the services and support they provide for youth and families:

- Nicole Tamayo-Benegas with the Nebraska Urban Indian Health Coalition.
- LaDonna Jones-Dunlap with the Urban League of Nebraska.

Both presenters were well-received and presented interesting and valuable information to the attendees.

The next OYS/JJPF Knowledge Exchange is Monday, April 27, 2020, from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. at the Extension Office.

RUNAWAY TASK FORCE UPDATE

The OYS Runaway Task Force has updated their work plan to focus on creating a coordinated community response to address the safety and needs of youth when youth have run away.

This includes researching current community responses, mapping potential “coordinated response” for Douglas County through our vision board (see vision board above, with thanks to Runaway TF Co-Chair Lt. Tracy Scherer’s creative art skills) and a data walk, facilitating a potential partnership meeting, and being intentional with inclusivity throughout the process.

The vision board tracks the task force’s progress from 2018 when we started looking at the numbers and realizing the only way kids can get services is to become system-involved, to the present where we are working on building a community partnership that is family driven and focused and truly about the community, and on through where we want our progress to be through 2021 utilizing community trust builders working with the families and not just navigating to services.

Through collaboration, communication and training we hope to see continued progress on this vision.
**WHAT IS R.E.D.?**

Racial and ethnic disparity (RED) refers to the unequal treatment of youth of color in the juvenile justice system. RED results in disparate outcomes for similarly situated youth. A disparity exists in many child-serving systems; we focus on the juvenile justice system because of its negative impact on entire communities.

This phenomenon may also be referred to as disproportionate minority contact or DMC. However, the term DMC is no longer accurate. People of color are no longer minorities in many places in the U.S. Further, it is possible to have proportionate numbers of youth of color in both the general and detention populations, but still have disparity in decision making.

Across the country, low-level offending youth of color and poor youth who come into contact with juvenile justice systems are often jailed even though they do not pose a public safety risk. This is because the decision to detain is often based on perception or a lack of alternative programs.

The youth of color comprise 38 percent of the youth population in the U.S., yet comprise nearly 70 percent of those who are confined. That is because the youth of color are arrested, charged and incarcerated more than White youth for similar conduct, a majority of which are minor status offenses such as consumption of alcohol, tobacco, smoking, truancy, or running away from home.

Disproportionality in detention reflects the effect of policies, procedures and practices in local juvenile justice systems. Our goal is to ensure the best life outcomes for all youth. When low-level offending youth of color and poor youth are jailed, the result is a negative impact on their life outcomes, the local economy, and the community’s public safety (because jailed youth are more likely to re-offend).

There are a number of things we can do to ensure that all low-level offending youth are released when appropriate, or are provided opportunities for rehabilitation in community-based alternatives to detention that are less costly, provide an opportunity for change, and offer better outcomes for public safety.

**Why Focus on Disparities in Detention?**

Studies show that youth with a history of detention are less likely to graduate from high school; are more likely to be unemployed as an adult, and are more likely to be arrested and imprisoned as an adult. Studies also show that youth in need of rehabilitation or intervention who are supervised in alternative settings have lower recidivism rates than incarcerated youth.

In many jurisdictions, the majority of youth held in detention awaiting trial for non-violent offenses, or for violating probation or failing to appear in court, are the youth of color. In the interest of equality and better outcomes for youth and public safety, it is crucial for jurisdictions to identify such populations and adopt viable solutions including alternatives to detention; and policies, practices, and procedures within the system that ensure equity for all youth.

**The Inequities We Work to Change ...**

- In 2003, 38% of the U.S. youth population was made up of youth of color. Yet, youth of color made up 65% of the secure detention population.
- Researchers conducting a study for the Justice Department found that in two-thirds of state and local juvenile justice systems they analyzed there was a “race effect” at some stage of the process that negatively impacted outcomes for youth of color. Their research also suggested that the effects of race “may accumulate as youth continue through the system.”
- The federal government recognized in 1992 that youth of color are treated differently by the justice system, and amended the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDPA) in an attempt to promote policies to address such disparities.
Despite this, the youth of color continue to be arrested, charged and incarcerated more than White youth for similar conduct, and are overrepresented at every decision-making point in the juvenile justice system.

- Studies demonstrate that youth of color are treated more harshly than White youth even when arrested and prosecuted for the same category of offense. For example, White youth use drugs at a slightly higher rate than African American youth and are more than a third more likely to have sold drugs than African American youth. But African American youth are arrested for drug offenses at about twice the rate of Whites and represent nearly half (48%) of all the youth incarcerated for a drug offense in the juvenile justice system.

**What can you do about it?**

Contact your state DMC Coordinator or juvenile justice specialist and express your commitment to addressing DMC in your county. The Douglas County, Nebraska, DMC Coordinator is A’Jamal Byndon and he can be reached at (402) 578-6729 or ajamal.byndon@douglascounty-ne.gov.

Resource: Burns Institute at [https://www.burnsinstitute.org/what-is-red/](https://www.burnsinstitute.org/what-is-red/)

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**RED CONFERENCE 2020**

The Douglas County Racial and Ethnic Disparities (RED) Committee of JDAI/OYS is planning a two-day Conference this fall. The Conference will focus on efforts to impact RED in our community as well as information regarding the use of credible messengers. It is planned to be held at the Omaha Marriott Downtown at the Capitol District on October 29 and 30. We have secured Antonio Fernandez (King Tone), former leader of the Latin Kings, who is now doing credible messenger work in Washington, DC, to deliver his message to us. We will also hear from Beresford Wilson, FAVOR Inc. – Connecticut, who speaks to the value of obtaining the voices of youth and their families while in the juvenile court system. There will also be many break-out sessions focusing on RED work, as well as numerous networking opportunities.

So, please SAVE THE DATE! Hope to see you there!

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