

2022 YOUTH JUSTICE COUNCIL

REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR

AND THE LEGISLATURE



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2022 YOUTH JUSTICE COUNCIL

REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR AND THE LEGISLATURE

PUBLISHED BY THE MONTANA BOARD OF CRIME CONTROL
AND THE YOUTH JUSTICE ADVISORY COUNCIL

LEO DUTTON, CHAIR, MONTANA BOARD OF CRIME CONTROL

RANDY SHIPMAN, CHAIR, YOUTH JUSTICE COUNCIL

NATALIA BOWSER, DIRECTOR, MONTANA BOARD OF CRIME CONTROL
MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

THIS REPORT WAS COMPILED BY
THE MONTANA BOARD OF CRIME CONTROL
MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

December 2022

MONTANA BOARD OF CRIME CONTROL
5 SOUTH LAST CHANCE GULCH
PO BOX 201408
HELENA, MT 59620-1408
406-444-3604
FAX: 406-444-4722
TTY: 406-444-7099

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5 South Last Chance Gulch, Helena, MT 59620-1408
Phone: 406-444-3604; Fax: 406-444-4722; Montana Relay 711 or
<https://dphhs.mt.gov/detd/mtap/mtapmtrelay/makeacall>.

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The mission of the Youth Justice Council is to improve the juvenile justice system by serving the best interest of Montana’s youth, families, and citizens by supporting research-based programs with positive outcomes.



Montana Board of Crime Control
Youth Justice Council
5 S Last Chance Gulch
PO Box 201408
Helena MT 59620
Phone (406)444-3604
Fax (406)444-4722
www.mbcc.mt.gov

Youth Justice Council
Members:

Randy Shipman
Chairperson

Mike Chavers
Vice Chairperson

Georgia Cady

Wyatt English

April Gabler

Tamara Greeling

Lilla Guiberson

Mary Jane Knisely

Holly Mook

Isaac Nehring

George Real Bird III

Emily Sallee

Brie Shulman

Geri Small

Pat Steinwand

RaeGyn Trombley

Staff:

Rachel Gemar,
Juvenile Justice Specialist

Amanda Rasmussen,
Administrative Support

July 2022

Dear Governor Gianforte, members of the Montana State Legislature, and fellow Montanans:

On behalf of the Youth Justice Council (YJC) of the Montana Board of Crime Control (MBCC), I am excited to submit this report that details the activities of the YJC, along with our recommendations regarding juvenile justice in Montana. I know that you all understand the responsibility we must ensure that all youth in Montana have the best possible chance to succeed, including those who have contact with the juvenile justice system.

This report will familiarize you with the structure and duties of the YJC, and introduce you to its members, who represent a wide variety of individuals from across the state. These people are dedicated to serving some of the most at-risk youth in our state, and I am always inspired by their service. I am also impressed with their insights into the needs of these at-risk youth and the ways that we can improve the system to serve them better. I am honored to serve with them.

Please take the time to read about the issues facing our youth and consider what you can do to help make a difference in their lives. The youth of Montana are facing challenges on several fronts, economic, social, educational; health related; the list goes on. It is crucial that we take steps to both reduce the number of children entering the juvenile justice system and work together to make sure that those who do enter it have the best possible chance of changing their lives for the better because of their experiences there. The YJC funds projects around the state that are working to accomplish those goals, (prevention and improving the juvenile justice system) with remarkable success. Please take this opportunity to learn what your fellow-Montanans are doing.

We at the YJC and MBCC wish you well as we enter this new year and hope that you will keep the needs of Montana's youth at the forefront of your discussions. If there is anything, we can do to aid you in this process, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Randy Shipman".

Randy Shipman, Youth Justice Council Chairman



2023 Youth Justice Council Board Members

Randy Shipman - Chair

Representing: Public agency concerned with delinquency prevention or treatment

rshipman@dillonelem.k12.mt.us

Holly Mook - Council Member

Representing: Experience & competence in addressing problems related to school violence & vandalism

hmook45@gmail.com

Mike Chavers - Vice Chair

Representing: Programs that are alternatives to incarceration, including recreation activities

mchavers@ybgr.org

Isaac Nehring - Council Member

Representing: Persons under the age of 28

isaacnehringmt@gmail.com

April Gabler - Council Member

Representing: Public agency concerned with delinquency prevention or treatment

aprilgabler@gmail.com

Mary Jane Knisely - Council Member

Representing: Law Enforcement & juvenile justice agencies, including juvenile & family court judges, etc.

MKnisely@mt.gov

Brie Shulman - Council Member

Representing: Nonprofit

bshulmanlpc@outlook.com

Lilla Guiberson - Council Member

Representing: Youth

emilygoob@gmail.com

Emily Sallee - Council Member

Representing: Persons licensed or certified in mental health and substance abuse

emily.sallee@umontana.edu

Patricia Steinwand - Council Member

Representing: Volunteers

psteinwand@ctihelena.org

George Real Bird III - Council Member

Representing: Elected Official

grealbird3@big Horncountymt.gov

RaeGyn Trombly - Council Member

Representing: Youth

RaeGyn1@gmail.com

Georgia Cady - Council Member

Representing: Victim or witness advocacy groups, for sexual abuse, exploitation and trauma

georgia.cady@tumbleweedprogram.org

Tamara Greeling - Council Member

Representing: Persons licensed or certified in mental health and substance abuse

tamaragreeling@gmail.com

Geri Small - Council Member

Representing: Tribal Member

gerismall@yahoo.com

Wyatt English - Council Member

Representing: Law Enforcement & juvenile justice agencies, including juvenile & family court judges, etc.

wenglish383@gmail.com

Executive Summary

The Montana Board of Crime Control (MBCC) is the designated state agency that receives juvenile justice funds from the United States Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). As the State Administering Agency (SAA), MBCC ensures Montana's compliance with the federal requirements of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 2002 (JJDP Act, Public Law 93-415) as amended by the Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2018 (JJRA, Public Law 115-385). The JJRA lists four core protections for juveniles: de-institutionalization of status offenders, sight and sound separation from adult inmates, removal of juveniles from adult jails and lockups, and racial/ethnic disparities (RED) reduction. MBCC monitors secure juvenile detention facilities, adult jails, and secure correctional facilities on a regular basis to ensure compliance with these protections.

The Youth Justice Council is a state advisory group to the Montana Board of Crime Control. Governor-appointed members from a variety of fields contribute their expertise regarding the juvenile justice system and youth issues. The YJC also helps MBCC apply for and distribute federal grant funds, build partnerships with outside agencies, and analyze juvenile justice data. Finally, YJC members assist with the creation of Montana's Three-Year Title II and RED Reduction Plan based on data trends, their professional knowledge, and input gathered from youth and families. As an advisory council, the purpose of the YJC is to provide advice to MBCC; not for legislative advocacy.

The Youth Justice Council recognizes the importance of reducing risk factors for delinquency and increasing protective factors for children, adolescents, and their families. Juvenile justice and delinquency prevention funds support mentorship programs, academic help, job skills training, mental health/substance abuse treatment, restorative justice practices, diversion, trauma-informed care, and other services that assist at-risk and justice-involved youth.

Federal Requirements

Montana's State Advisory Group, the Youth Justice Advisory Council (YJC), was established by a Governor's Executive Order in response to Section 223 of the federal JJDP Act. Pursuant to the JJDP Act, each state must establish a State Advisory Group (SAG) on Juvenile Justice to receive Title II Formula Grant funds. The YJC is a Governor-appointed panel of 15-33 persons from across the state of Montana, each with his/her training, experience, or special knowledge of the juvenile justice system. Members are appointed for two-year terms. The purpose of the YJC is to study juvenile justice issues and make recommendations regarding policy and funding decisions to improve the quality of life for all Montana youth.

Currently the YJC membership is representative of 6 of the 12 Montana Association of Counties (MACo) districts. The YJC meets quarterly in Helena to address juvenile justice issues and trends in Montana and to work on its state and federal responsibilities in accordance with the JJDP Act. Those responsibilities include the following:

- Submit to the Governor, the Board of Crime Control, and the Montana Legislature, at least annually, recommendations regarding state compliance with the federal requirements of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act Reauthorization of 2018;
- Participate in the development and review of the state's juvenile justice plan prior to submission of the plan to the Board of Crime Control for final action, and develop and review annual updates of the plan;
- Review and comment on all juvenile justice and delinquency prevention grant applications submitted to the Board of Crime Control; and
- Contact and seek regular input from juveniles currently under the jurisdiction of the juvenile justice system and state, local, and private agencies on juvenile justice issues to better coordinate services and efficiently utilize available resources.

Members represent one or more of the following groups:

- Locally elected officials representing general purpose local government
- Representatives of law enforcement and juvenile justice agencies
- Representatives of public agencies concerned with delinquency prevention or treatment, such as welfare, social services, child and adolescent mental health, education, child and adolescent substance abuse, special education, recreation, and youth services agencies
- Representatives of private nonprofit organizations, including persons with special focus on preserving and strengthening families, youth development, delinquency prevention and treatment, neglected or dependent children, etc.
- Volunteers who work with delinquent youth or youth at risk of delinquency
- Representatives of programs that are alternatives to incarceration, including programs providing organized recreation activities

- Persons with special experience and competence in addressing problems related to school violence and vandalism, and alternatives to suspension and expulsion
- Persons, licensed or certified by the State of Montana, with expertise and competence in preventing and addressing mental health and substance abuse needs in delinquent youth and youth at risk of delinquency
- Representatives of victim or witness advocacy groups, including at least one individual with expertise in addressing the challenges of sexual abuse and exploitation and trauma
- Tribal representatives or other individuals with significant expertise in tribal law enforcement and juvenile justice in tribal communities

Core Protections for Juveniles

In 1974 Congress enacted the *Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) Act*; the JJDP Act was reauthorized by Congress in 2002¹ and 2018. The JJDP Act provides funding to states to support four core protections for America’s youth who become involved in the juvenile justice system. These are the basis for the state’s required work plan which is submitted annually to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) by MBCC on behalf of the State of Montana.

The four core protections include the following:

De-institutionalization of Status Offenders (DSO)

The State of Montana must ensure that juveniles who are charged with a status offense are not placed in secure detention or in correctional facilities. Status offenses are those that would not be an offense if committed by someone age of 18 or older.

Sight and Sound Separation

The State of Montana must ensure that a juvenile charged with a delinquent offense and detained or confined in an adult jail or lock-up will have no verbal or visual contact with adult offenders.

Racial/Ethnic Disparities (R/ED)

The State of Montana must outline plans to identify and reduce R/ED at five key points of contact in the juvenile justice system: arrest, diversion, detention, secure confinement, and adult transfer. R/ED replaced Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC) in the Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2018. The Youth Justice Council reports data on all racial/ethnic groups that make up 1% or more of the youth population in Montana.

The table below represents all unduplicated youth ages 10-17 that were referred to youth court or adjudicated in 2021 for any type of offense. Juvenile justice data can be difficult to interpret and has several limitations. Numbers captured by the youth courts can change depending on the time at which data is pulled. The status of juvenile cases changes periodically, and sealed/expunged records are

deleted from all youth court data. Several racial/ethnic groups also have an extremely small population size in Montana. For these groups, the percentages of youth in the juvenile justice system may appear inflated. Finally, to avoid duplication all individuals identifying as Hispanic were placed exclusively in the Hispanic/Latinx ethnic category, regardless of race.

2021 Juvenile Offenses and Dispositions by Race/Ethnicity

	American Indian/ Alaska Native	Black	White	Hispanic/ Latinx	Asian	Multiracial	Unknown	Total
Total Population of Youth Ages 10-17	10,960	1,519	85,083	6,126	1,250	no data	no data	104,938
Youth Referred (Unduplicated)	403	49	1815	57	8	69	70	2,471
Percent Referred	3.68%	3.23%	2.1%	0.93%	0.64%	-	-	2.35%
Youth Diverted (Unduplicated)	351	39	1,656	47	8	61	60	2,222
Percent Diverted	87.10%	79.59%	91.24%	82.46%	100%	88.41%	85.71%	89.92%
Youth Detained (Unduplicated)	70	12	214	11	0	11	6	324
Percent Detained	17.36%	24.49%	11.79%	19.30%	0%	15.94%	8.57%	13.11%
Youth Securely Confined (Unduplicated)	2	0	7	0	0	1	0	10
Percent Securely Confined	0.50%	0%	0.39%	0%	0%	1.45%	0%	0.40%
Youth Transferred to Adult Court (Unduplicated)	4	1	3	0	0	0	1	9
Percent Transferred to Adult Court	0.99%	2.04%	0.17%	0%	0%	0%	1.43%	0.36%

Montana continues to see disparities at multiple points of contact for minority youth. Black and American Indian youth are significantly more likely than white youth to be referred for a delinquent offense. They are also less likely to be diverted, more likely to be detained, more likely to be charged as an adult, and are typically more likely to be placed in a juvenile correctional facility. Hispanic/Latinx youth (of all races) were less likely to be referred but also less likely to be diverted and more likely to be detained.

To address these issues, the YJC has continued to reach out to various tribes and local communities to better understand their needs. MBCC continues to provide strong support through funding and technical assistance to its Tribal subgrantees. The YJC has also encouraged subgrant programs to increase their

focus on providing services to youth of color. Some programs, such as YWCA of Missoula, actively recruit volunteers and staff from minority backgrounds to share their unique perspectives and support youth of color. The Missoula County Community Justice Department and Inner Roads have also been building relationships with nearby tribes to establish trust and learn how to provide meaningful support for traditional practices. The YJC will continue to support interventions that foster a sense of belonging and improve outcomes for all at-risk and delinquent youth, regardless of race or ethnicity.

Removal of Juveniles from Adult Jails and Lock-ups

The State of Montana must ensure that no juvenile shall be detained or confined in a jail or lock-up intended for adult offenders beyond specific time limits – six hours in a Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) county and 24 hours in a non-MSA county. Limited exceptions may be made if adverse travel and/or safety conditions exist.

The reauthorization of the JJDP Act in 2018 added a new requirement regarding the pre-trial detention of juveniles charged as adults. Such juveniles may not be detained in an adult jail/lockup or with sight or sound contact with adult inmates *unless* the court determines, after a hearing and in writing, that it is in the interest of justice to do so. This determination is based on the following factors:

- Age
- Physical and mental maturity
- The present mental state of the juvenile, including whether the juvenile presents an imminent risk of harm to the juvenile
- The nature and circumstances of the alleged offense
- The juvenile’s history of prior delinquent acts
- The relative ability of the available adult and juvenile detention facilities to not only meet the specific needs of the juvenile but also to protect the safety of the public as well as other detained youth, and
- Any other relevant factor(s)

The court must conduct a hearing every 30 days (or 45 days in rural jurisdictions) to reevaluate whether it is still in the interest of justice to continue to detain the juvenile in an adult jail or lockup and, if so, issue a new court order. Please see MBCC’s Compliance Monitoring Manual for more information about the Section 223(a)(11)(B) exception to the jail removal requirement and how it will be monitored.

YJC Subcommittees

Executive Subcommittee: In the absence of a quorum at a regularly scheduled YJC meeting, or between regular meetings as necessary, the Executive Subcommittee may take limited, time-critical actions to carry out the essential responsibilities of the YJC. This body also makes recommendations to the YJC regarding nominations, federal grant applications, associated deadlines related to the Three-Year Plan, and compliance with the core requirements of Title II legislation.

Tribal Outreach Subcommittee was formed to help the Montana Board of Crime Control develop important and lasting relationships with our Tribal Nations. The committee discusses concerns expressed by tribal members, organizations, and agencies to inform decisions made by the YJC and MBCC.

RED/DMC Subcommittee was formed to maintain compliance with the federal mandate to reduce racial and ethnic disparities (RED) in the juvenile justice system by analyzing data, creating/implementing a RED reduction plan, and reporting progress on statewide goals to OJJDP annually. The committee provides guidance through recommendations to the YJC and MBCC regarding issues of disparity and disproportionality.

Legislative/Mental Health Subcommittee was formed to research best and promising practices for youth and to recommend research-based improvements to Montana's juvenile justice system. Subcommittee members monitor legislation related to youth needs and promote mental health/substance use prevention and treatment services for at-risk and justice-involved youth of all ages.

Youth Subcommittee members meet to discuss issues of interest to youth in Montana. They draw from their own experience, surveys completed by juveniles in detention facilities, and state data to advocate for local youth. The committee is youth-led with support from a few adult YJC members and MBCC staff. Youth members may create their own initiatives based on issues they are passionate about. Multiple youth also serve on (and take leadership roles in) other subcommittees in addition to their contributions at quarterly YJC meetings.

Application Review Committee members work with MBCC staff to review subgrant applications for Title II and discretionary grant funds. The committee submits subgrant funding recommendations to the YJC for approval. The YJC's approved recommendations are forwarded to MBCC for review and final award or denial.

A Profile of Montana's Justice-Involved Youth

Current data from the Office of The Court Administrator indicates that Montana had seen a consistent decline in most areas of juvenile crime in recent years, except for a slight increase in 2019. Referral rates dropped drastically in 2020 and remained low in 2021. This is likely due, in part, to restrictions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Following are notable juvenile crime trends for the State of Montana:

- The number of unduplicated youths referred to Youth Court fell from 3,420 in 2019 to 2,663 in 2020 and 2,599 in 2021^{2,3}
- The number of referrals (one youth may have multiple referrals) to Youth Court dropped from 5,249 in 2019 to 3,931 in 2020 and 3,802 in 2021^{2,3}
- The number of juvenile offenses (a referral may have multiple offenses) has declined steadily over the past decade. The total number of offenses committed by juveniles dropped from 7,467 in 2019 to 5,589 in 2020 and 5,251 in 2021^{2,3}
- Youth referrals related to the possession or distribution of dangerous drugs dropped from 1,015 in 2019 to 138 in 2021.^{2,3}
- Referrals for property crimes steadily decreased from 1,783 offenses in 2019 to 1,359 offenses in 2021
- Referrals for crimes against persons decreased in 2020 and increased again in 2021
- The most common mental health diagnoses reported by justice-involved youth include Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, Depression, Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, and Anxiety
- Justice-involved youth in Montana continue to experience higher rates of adverse childhood experiences such as emotional abuse/neglect, physical neglect, parental loss, intimate partner violence, substance abuse, and mental illness than adults in the original ACEs study
- In 2021, 231 youth were sent to an out-of-home placement. Of these, just under 70 youth were sent out of state. Out-of-state placements are far more costly and longer on average than in-state placements.

To prevent juvenile delinquency and its escalation into chronic criminality, the Youth Justice Council supports prevention services for at-risk youth of all ages and their families, pre-arrest diversion and restorative justice interventions for youth with low-level offenses, post-arrest diversion with wrap around services, and alternatives to detention or incarceration whenever possible. The YJC recommends interventions that are trauma-informed, developmentally appropriate, restorative in nature, community-based, and incorporate family input and traditional cultural practices when appropriate.

Youth Justice Council Recommendations

The following recommendations were compiled by the Youth Justice Council based on state and national research, input from youth and families, and the expertise of individual members:

- Invest in school-based and community-based youth mental health/substance use treatment services
- Support the implementation of universal screenings in high schools for depression and suicidal ideation
- Support inpatient substance abuse treatment services for juveniles
- Expand the use of school-based programs (such as Youth Aware of Mental Health) that teach students how to advocate for their own mental health needs
- Encourage the use of social-emotional learning programs in schools
- Expand Medicaid eligibility for outdoor residential behavioral health programs
- Require courts to consider time served during sentencing for juveniles held in pre-trial detention facilities
- Study and address long court processing times for juveniles in detention facilities
- Invest in programs and services that support youth after their probation ends

2021-2022 Federal Grants and Funding Priorities

Title II – Formula Grant

The Title II Formula Grant supports state and local efforts to develop and implement more effective education, training, research, prevention, diversion, treatment, and rehabilitation programs. Programs address juvenile delinquency as well as initiatives to improve the juvenile justice system per Section 221(a) of the JJDP Act. Funds are allocated to states and territories based on their relative population under the age of 18.

In 2021 and 2022, MBCC awarded Title II funds to the following agencies:

- Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Helena, Yellowstone County, & Butte
- Boys and Girls Club of Yellowstone County & the Hi-Line
- Chippewa Cree Tribe
- Friendship House of Christian Service
- Bitterroot Ecological Awareness Resources Inc.
- CASA of Missoula
- YWCA of Missoula
- Center for Restorative Youth Justice

Title II funds were also used for monitoring detention centers for compliance with the JJDP Act and for funding a portion of Do the *Write* Thing. Do the *Write* Thing is a national program that encourages seventh and eighth grade students to write about youth violence and make a commitment to reduce violence in their schools and communities.

Title V – Delinquency Prevention Program

The Montana Board of Crime Control was awarded \$1 million from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) to expand restorative justice programming in rural areas, high-poverty areas, and Qualified Opportunity Zones. The program model, which also emphasized mentoring and case management, was modeled after the Adolescent Diversion Project, an evidence-based program that has been highly successful in lowering delinquency and recidivism rates.

MBCC awarded funds to the Missoula County Community Justice Department and the Missoula City-County Health Department. The Community Justice Department partnered with Inner Roads, a nonprofit that provides Outdoor Behavioral Healthcare and ongoing youth/family support. The program provides 6-week summer expeditions for youth who struggle with self-destructive behavior, mental health issues, addictions, trauma, and negative peer/family relationships. Participants are accompanied by a therapist, a wilderness guide, and experienced staff. Parents/guardians work with a case manager while the youth is away to learn new tools and address family concerns.

The Missoula City-County Health Department partnered with Friends of the Children, a long-term mentoring program for at-risk youth. Professional mentors are paired with children as young as 4-6. Friends of the Children guarantees that youth will have consistent mentorship throughout their childhood and adolescence. The program has had impressive results in other states, and MBCC is excited to support Montana's first Friends of the Children branch.

Subgrantee Success Stories

Below are just a few success stories from hundreds of youth who were served in 2022. All names and initials have been changed to protect the privacy of youth and families.

“A boy in his late teens was referred to the outdoor therapeutic program upon receiving a family domestic violence charge. He was unable to take accountability for his impact on the fear he created in his home and would become angry when asked about the subject. Within a week of the program, he was having vulnerable conversations with his mentors and shared about the rage he has had since his father died. Through daily self-reflective activities, letters written to his deceased father, letters written and exchanged with his mother and sister, and two restorative circles with peers and mentors per day, this youth shared an overwhelming amount of compassion, empathy, and determination for change for both his family and his peers. He signed himself up for therapy and shared his favorite resources from the program with his sister, who he believed was also quietly suffering from the loss of their father. He requested to return to the program next year as a volunteer and is eager to be a mentor for us when he is old enough. He was excited to participate in our community mentorship program upon graduating from the outdoor program, but instead was rapidly accepted into his top choice location of Job Corps to pursue electrical engineering. His mother has since shared that the program changed her family members' lives and hopes to volunteer for us as well.”

Inner Roads

“After a year involving some significant risk taking (running away, using hard drugs, etc.), there was very little trust nor communication between MB and her mom. It took one youth workshop at CRYJ for MB to start opening up, and she particularly thrived in our mental health and coping workshops, identifying a daily sense of anxiety that she felt she was trying to manage with unhealthy behaviors, such as avoidance and substances. By the time she and her mom came to a Community Impact Circle with other families, her mom pulled staff aside to say that there had been a significant positive change in MB's behavior at home and their relationship dynamic. During MB's completion meeting, she said that she and her mom are talking more, and she credits the invitation to be vulnerable at CRYJ as the thing that opened that door. MB's mom expressed appreciation for seeing the development of deeper empathy and self-awareness and was feeling hopeful for MB's next steps.”

Center for Restorative Youth Justice

“On my first visit to meet my CASA kids at their grandparent’s home, ‘Joseph’ hardly looked up. He was playing a video game similar to Red Light Green Light, so I asked if he wanted to play in real life. Soon after, Joseph, his little sister, his grandma, and I were all lined up in the yard running on green, freezing on red, and racing to the finish line. Joseph transformed into a ball of energy, talking a million miles a minute. This paved the way for Joseph to develop a trusting relationship with me. On one visit, Joseph brought me toys from his father. He said that he missed his father, who is incarcerated. I was able to advocate in my reports for increased communication between Joseph and his father. One evening, I called Joseph. His mom was frosting his birthday cake. ‘Can you come to my birthday?!’ he asked. In that moment, I realized how far my CASA family had come. After a nearly two-year long battle with addiction, incarceration, and mental health, the mother was now back in her own apartment with her kids, planning a birthday celebration with a homemade cake. My heart melted knowing that I saw them through it all.”

CASA of Missoula

“James started in our school-based program as a small child. He is the only boy in a family of girls, and his dad is often at work, so he didn't get a lot of time with a male role model. In our school-based program, James received one-to-one support from a high school student, but he was unable to form a lasting relationship with these mentors because they would graduate from high school. James was on our community program waitlist for two years before he received an adult mentor, Dan. Dan and James connected quickly and were together every week, going fishing and riding bikes. James's mom stated that her son never really seemed engaged in life and was often stuck in a video game. Because of his mentor, James has shown a passion for outdoor activities, enjoys school, and has had a great attitude toward life. James even saved up his money to purchase a bike so that he and Dan could go bike riding together more often.”

Big Brothers Big Sisters of Yellowstone County

Restorative Justice in Montana

Restorative justice is a theory that emphasizes repairing the harm that is done to the community and to the victim through the criminal behavior. Restorative justice is based on three principles. First, those who have been injured or harmed must be restored, to the degree possible, to their condition prior to the harm. Second, those who have been most directly impacted by the crime should be offered the opportunity to participate in the process. Finally, the community's function is to maintain peace and safety. Restorative justice takes work and commitment.

Restorative justice is a different way of perceiving crime and the way we respond to it. By focusing on the harm caused by the crime and the harm done to victims, offenders are required to take responsibility for their actions and the harm they have caused. Criminal acts are not simply defined by the law or laws broken and the punishment merited; rather, the victims' needs are recognized, and community plays a strong role in the reintegration of the offender. Restorative Justice is rated as a promising practice by the National Institute of Justice for reducing juvenile reoffending, increasing victims' satisfaction with the justice process, and improving youth compliance with restitution requirements.

The most common restorative intervention used with young offenders in Montana is the restorative circle. Restorative circles include the juvenile(s) who caused harm, the individuals who were impacted by the offense, guests invited to support the victim and/or offender, and a trained facilitator. Each individual is given an opportunity to discuss their perspective on the incident that occurred. The victim can also express the challenges that he/she experienced as a result of the offense and ask questions about the incident. During this process, the facilitator maintains a calm and respectful environment. Once all individuals have shared, the group discusses potential options for repairing the harm. For example, a juvenile that vandalized property may be asked to contribute labor or money to fix the damage. Restorative circles bring clarity to victims, encourage youth to take responsibility for their actions, and allow every participant to contribute to a resolution.

The YJC continues to support restorative justice efforts across Montana. In addition to funding the Center for Restorative Youth Justice, the Title II and Delinquency Prevention Program grants have funded an annual Restorative Practices training for the past four years. This training, provided at MBCC's Crime Prevention Conference, has taught detention and corrections officers, educators, school resource officers, probation officers, and others to effectively provide restorative interventions and accountability for youth. Through the Delinquency Prevention Program, the YJC plans to support additional trainings over the next two years. Attendees have reported positive impacts from the training in a variety of situations, from school discipline to resolving conflicts in a correctional setting.

Montana's Do the *Write* Thing Challenge

For the past 15 years Montana has participated in the Do the *Write* Thing Challenge, a writing campaign that provides 7th and 8th grade students with the opportunity to examine how youth violence impacts their lives, learn the causes of youth violence, and make a commitment to reduce youth violence. Students write essays and poems to voice the effects of violence in their schools, communities, and homes and to express what they can do about youth violence.⁹

More than 2,000 middle school students have submitted thought-provoking, insightful essays and poems. Each year Montana's Do the *Write* Thing committee selects one boy and one girl to represent Montana as student national ambassadors. These two students travel with their parents and teacher to Washington, D.C., where they attend a four-day gathering with other student ambassadors. Students tour the city, attend workshops, and speak to legislators. A leather-bound book containing the ambassadors' writings is presented to the Library of Congress.

The Montana Board of Crime Control and the Youth Justice Advisory Council would like to congratulate Montana's 2021 and 2022 Do the *Write* Thing Student National Ambassadors:

Christa Lashley

Laurel Middle School
Laurel, Montana

Odin Wiggins

Dillon Middle School
Dillon, Montana

Nimalka De Alwis

East Middle School
Butte, Montana

Teague Cromwell

Anaconda Jr/Sr High School
Anaconda, Montana

Montana's Finalists

The Montana Board of Crime Control and the Youth Justice Advisory Council would also like to acknowledge Montana's Do the *Write* Thing Finalists:

2021

Ashley Alberez, Allison Baillet, Taylor Dunn, Tyla Larson, Mac Campbell, Kieran Foote Spotted Wolf, William Hansen, and Michael Moorman

2022

Emily Allred, Lilla Guiberson, Averie Nielsen, Aliyah Riener, Loyal Anderson, Mitchell Clavadetscher, James Pearston, and Gabe Price

Finally, the Youth Justice Council thanks all of the teachers, parents, volunteer judges, and staff who make this program possible.



From left to right: Natalia Bowser, Rachel Gemar, Kieran Foote Spotted Wolf, Guerna Becker, Christa Lashley, Ansleigh Held, Odin Wiggins, William Hansen, Tyla Larson, Sheriff Leo Dutton, Michael Moorman



From left to right: Randy Shipman, Lilla Guiberson, Aliyah Riener, Averie Nielsen, Teague Cromwell, James Pearston, Emily Allred, Nimalka De Alwis, Loyal Anderson, Mitchell Clavadetscher, Natalia Bowser, Rachel Gemar

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- ³ Montana Judicial Branch (2021). *Youth Court At-A-Glance*. Retrieved from [2021 Youth Court Report](#).

