KEEP KIDS FREE
SYSTEMS-LEVEL CHANGE TO DISRUPT THE
TRAUMA-TO-PRISON PIPELINE

Rise for Youth
United Families, Safe Communities

James Braxton
He/Him

Kate McCord
She/They

ACTION ALLIANCE
Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence
THIS IS AN EXPERIMENT. WE DON’T KNOW THE RESULTS YET.

Source: https://giphy.com/gifs/chemistry-science-experiment-no-idea-whohm-doing
WE’LL BE TALKING ABOUT TRAUMA, INCARCERATION AND STRUCTURAL OPPRESSION.

PLEASE TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF.

TRUE OR FALSE?
**IT COSTS APPROXIMATELY $50,000 TO INCARCERATE ONE YOUTH FOR A YEAR.**

**FALSE**

Virginia spends $187,473 to incarcerate one youth for a year.

LA County spends more than $233,000 a year (2016)

- The largest chunk of state juvenile justice spending is on youth prisons, an approach that came into existence 100+ years ago.
- Nearly one third of the DJJ (Department of Juvenile Justice) operating expenses in 2016 went directly to youth incarceration compared with 2 percent to support community-based services.

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**OUR NATION DISPROPORTIONATELY INCARCERATES BLACK YOUTH.**

**TRUE**

Black youth in Virginia are seven times more likely than white youth to be incarcerated; Latinx youth are almost 2.5 times more likely than white youth to be incarcerated.

States where Black youth are at least 10x more likely to be held in placement as white youth: New Jersey, Wisconsin, Montana, Delaware, Connecticut, and Massachusetts.

The Civil Rights Data Collection (CRDC) reveals that students of certain racial or ethnic groups and students with disabilities are disciplined at far higher rates than their peers, beginning in preschool.
MOST YOUTH ENTER THE SYSTEM FOR NONVIOLENT OFFENSES

TRUE

Over 800,000 youth under the age of 18 were arrested in the year 2017 alone.

Common drivers of youth arrest and incarceration are status offenses, meaning conduct that would not be considered a crime if it were committed by an adult.

Examples of status offenses include truancy, running away from home, violating curfew, underage use of alcohol, and behavior that adults deem as unruly (legally referred to as general “ungovernability”).

YOUTH INVOLVED WITH THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM HAVE MORE EXTENSIVE TRAUMA HISTORIES THAN YOUTH NOT INVOLVED WITH THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

TRUE

The US Attorney General’s Task Force on Children Exposed to Violence has concluded that childhood trauma is associated with involvement in the juvenile justice system.

• In a 2014 study of the abuse histories of more than 60,000 youth in Florida’s juvenile justice system, for example, nearly half of the girls (45.1 percent) experienced five or more forms of trauma and abuse. Over a quarter of boys (27.4 percent) of boys experienced five or more forms of trauma and abuse.

• These findings are consistent with other research, including a 2010 study of a nationally representative sample of justice-involved youth, that show high rates of complex trauma and multiple forms of victimization among system-involved kids.
EVEN ONE SUSPENSION IN NINTH GRADE **DOUBLES**
THE LIKELIHOOD THAT STUDENTS WILL DROP OUT EVENTUALLY

**TRUE**

Students designated as having disabilities are two times as likely as their peers to be punished with suspension and expulsion, and researchers have found that even one suspension in ninth grade **doubles** the likelihood that students will drop out eventually.

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POLICE OFFICERS ARE REQUIRED TO UNDERGO SPECIFIC TRAINING BEFORE WORKING IN SCHOOLS

**FALSE**

There is currently no federal requirement for school resource officers to be trained specifically in working with children and youth before serving in schools.

87% of all high schools, 85% of all middle schools, and 34% of all elementary schools employ either full-time or part-time School Resource Officers (SROs), with the great majority staffing at full-time levels.

Virginia first mandated training for SROs in 2019.
WHY IS A SV/IPV COALITION WORKING ON THIS?

WE SEEK A RADICALLY HOPEFUL FUTURE

- People are free and have what they need to reach their full potential;
- Relationships, families, and communities are healthy, equitable, nourishing, and joyful;
- Government, institutions, and systems are rooted in equity and justice;
- All decisions are grounded in whether they will benefit our future descendants, and sustain our beautiful earth.
WE SEE OUR WORK TIED CLOSELY WITH OTHER LIBERATION MOVEMENTS

Systems Change Requires...

Countering Racist Cultural Narratives
**THE SCHOOL-TO-PRISON / TRAUMA-TO-PRISON PIPELINE**

The School-to-Prison Pipeline is a set of policies and procedures that drive our nation's schoolchildren, especially our most at-risk children, out of classrooms and into the juvenile and criminal justice system.

The Action Alliance calls this dynamic the Trauma-to-Prison-Pipeline because it fails young people who are experiencing high levels of toxic stress by responding in overly punitive ways to youth who exhibit normal reactions to trauma and toxic stress.

Youth of color and youth with disabilities are particularly targeted for disproportionately high levels of heavy-handed disciplinary responses to vague and subjective infractions in school, such as “defiance of authority”, or “classroom disruption”. Viewed from a trauma-informed lens, these same behaviors may signal youth who are suffering and struggling with ongoing effects of trauma.
CRIMINALIZATION IS....

...the social and political process by which society determines which actions or behaviors – and by who – will be punished by the state.

While framed as neutral, decisions about what kinds of conduct to punish, how, and how much are very much a choice, guided by existing structures of economic and social inequality based on race, gender, sexuality, disability, and poverty, among others.

Source: Criminalizing Domestic Violence Curriculum, Survived and Punished, author Mariame Kaba
RESTORATIVE JUSTICE BELIEVES:
• Crime is a violation of the law and the state.
• Violations create guilt.
• Justice requires the state to determine blame (guilt) and impose punishment.

ASKS:
• Who has been hurt?
• What are their needs?
• How can safety, connection, and autonomy be re-established?

ASKS:
• What rules/laws have been broken?
• Who did it?
• What do they deserve?

BELIEVES:
• Trauma causes disconnection, a feeling of loss of control, and isolation.
• Trauma healing can be facilitated through transparency, safety, peer support, trustworthiness, collaboration, and empowerment.

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BELIEVES:
• Harm is violation of people, relationship and obligations to one another.
• Violations create obligations.
• Justice involves everyone in an effort to address the harm.

Why do we need restorative justice?
Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8N3LiLlv00&feature=youtu.be
WHY DO SO MANY SURVIVORS PREFER RESTORATIVE JUSTICE?

- Survivors say it represents better chance of meeting needs for safety/justice and ensuring others won’t be harmed in future.
- Holds people accountable in a meaningful way.
- Shown to significantly reduce posttraumatic stress symptoms in survivors.
- Substantially reduces recidivism among the people who committed harm.
- 80 to 90% of crime victim participants satisfied with process and results.

Source: [https://allianceforsafetyandjustice.org/crimesurvivorspeak/](https://allianceforsafetyandjustice.org/crimesurvivorspeak/)

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**Alternatives to Incarceration**

Victims prefer holding people that commit crimes accountable through different options beyond just prison such as rehabilitation, mental health treatment, drug treatment, community supervision, or community.

- 23% Holding people that commit crimes accountable by putting them in prison
- 7% Other: Includes both, neither, and don't know
- 70% Holding people that commit crimes accountable through different options beyond just prison

Source: [https://allianceforsafetyandjustice.org/crimesurvivorspeak/](https://allianceforsafetyandjustice.org/crimesurvivorspeak/)
Research Shows Entire Black Communities Suffer Trauma After Police Shootings

Police killings of unarmed African Americans have created a mental health crisis of enormous proportions.

Source: Research Shows Entire Black Communities Suffer Trauma After Police Shootings, August 3, 2018
NEARLY EVERYONE WHO COMMITS VIOLENCE HAS ALSO SURVIVED IT.

AND NOW HERE’S THE TRAINING IN A BOX
KEEP KIDS FREE
HOW WE CAN ALL STOP THE
TRAUMA-TO-PRISON PIPELINE
ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES STUDY (ACES)

What are ACES?

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) is the term given to describe all types of abuse, neglect, and other traumatic experiences that occur to individuals under the age of 18. The landmark Kaiser ACE Study examined the relationships between these experiences during childhood and reduced health and wellbeing later in life.

ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES ARE COMMON

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ABUSE</th>
<th>FAMILY DYSFUNCTION</th>
<th>NEGLIGENCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11% EMOTIONAL ABUSE</td>
<td>11% INCARCERATED RELATIVE</td>
<td>10% PHYSICAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21% SEXUAL ABUSE</td>
<td>13% MOTHER TREATED VIOLENTLY</td>
<td>15% EMOTIONAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28% PHYSICAL ABUSE</td>
<td>19% MENTAL ILLNESS</td>
<td>28% SUBSTANCE ABUSE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TRAUMA AND TOXIC STRESS

Some children experience ACEs as trauma.

Trauma = when a child is threatened by an event that he or she has experienced or witnessed.

Sometimes ACEs are more than one-time events, and are experienced as toxic stress.

Toxic Stress = unrelenting stress caused by extreme poverty, neglect, abuse, or severe parental depression.

Permission to use granted by: Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=109&v=VwFkcOZHkIw
THE VAST MAJORITY OF KIDS IN THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM ARE SURVIVORS OF TRAUMA AND HAVE ENDURED YEARS OF TOXIC STRESS.
YOUNG SURVIVORS OF TRAUMA BEHAVE IN WAYS THAT SHOW THEY ARE SUFFERING.

IN SCHOOL, THIS MAY LOOK LIKE:

- Irritability, refusing to participate
- Sleepiness
- Not being able to focus, difficulty with memory
- Lack of interest
- A nervous system on high alert
PAIR SHARE

- HAVE YOU SEEN ANY OF THESE BEHAVIORS AMONG STUDENTS IN YOUR SCHOOL?
- WHAT WAS DONE ABOUT IT?
- DID THE INTERVENTION ADDRESS THE PROBLEMATIC BEHAVIOR ONLY, OR DID IT ALSO ADDRESS THE UNDERLYING CAUSE OF THE BEHAVIOR?

Source: BULLIES IN BLUE The Origins and Consequences Of School Policing. American Civil Liberties Union. April 2017

https://wtvr.com/2015/10/22/baby-carrot-assault-charge/
POLICE OFFICER GRABS STUDENT AND SLAMS HER TO THE GROUND, SOUTH CAROLINA

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bkS1PaEuHf0

Warning: this scene depicts physical violence.

Image source: https://jcjusticecenter.files.wordpress.com/2013/05/20121117schools-to-prison-pipeline-graphic-by-community-coalition.png
TRAUMA-TO-PRISON PIPELINE

THE SEXUAL ABUSE TO PRISON PIPELINE: THE GIRLS’ STORY

PUNISHING SURVIVORS OF TRAUMA COMPOUNDS THEIR SUFFERING.

Image source: http://voiceofdetroit.net/2012/07/02/nations-high-court-ends-mandatory-life-sentences-for-youth/
HOW WE DEFINE THE PROBLEM DETERMINES HOW WE WORK ON THE PROBLEM.

- Non-compliant
- Defiant
- Disruptive

VS.

- Overwhelmed
- Traumatized
- Fearful

WHICH DESCRIPTIONS ARE MORE HELPFUL WHEN ADDRESSING THE ROOT CAUSE?
“I became even more withdrawn and angry. I felt completely disconnected from my family, from friends; and the counselors inside offered no support for the real problems I was facing. I felt like nobody believed that I could actually do something positive with my life — especially the staff inside the facilities, who treated me like a case number, not like a person. At that time what I needed was to talk to folks about all I had been through, to feel connected to people — to feel useful, so that I could find my own direction in life. I needed to heal from the trauma and to be supported with love and encouragement.”
– NADIYAH SHEREFF

WHAT IF OUR SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY RECOGNIZED TRAUMA AND SUFFERING IN OUR CHILDREN... AND RESPONDED TO THEM WITH COMPASSION?

Family doesn’t just mean being related. It means feeling like you belong.

Credit: Performing Statistics (performingstatistics.com)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Traditional Discipline</th>
<th>Restorative Justice</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focuses &amp; Goals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retribution and punishment for the offender</td>
<td>Address harms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enforce rules</td>
<td>Healing, learning, and growth for all involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address offender</td>
<td>Build relationships and community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>React swiftly</td>
<td>Prevention and meaningful process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What rule was broken?</td>
<td>Who was harmed and what harm was done?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who broke the rule?</td>
<td>What are the needs and responsibilities of all affected?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What punishment is warranted?</td>
<td>How do all affected parties address needs and repair harms?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Results</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exclusion and isolation</td>
<td>Inclusion and connectedness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stigmatization and alienation</td>
<td>Repaired, restored, and strengthened relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Offender accepts punishment</td>
<td>Offender takes responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health problems for offender</td>
<td>Social and emotional learning for all involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victim not heard/has less satisfaction</td>
<td>Victim heard/has more satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High recidivism</td>
<td>Lower recidivism, suspensions, and court referrals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower attendance and graduation rates</td>
<td>Higher attendance and graduation rates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Larger disparities</td>
<td>Reduced disparities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damage to school climate</td>
<td>Improved school climate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Suspended Progress | JustChildren Program | Legal Aid Justice Center | May 2016

WHAT’S WRONG WITH YOU?

MOVING FROM A PUNITIVE RESPONSE TO A TRAUMA-INFORMED RESPONSE
WE HAVE THE TOOLS TO GIVE KIDS WHAT THEY NEED

CREATING A TRAUMA-INFORMED CLASSROOM

• Safety
• Trust + Transparency
• Peer Support + Mutual Self-Help
• Collaboration
• Empowerment, Voice + Choice
• Understanding of Cultural, Historical + Gender Issues
TRAUMA-INFORMED SCHOOL PRACTICES

- Safety
- Belonging
- A sense of competency
- Choice
- Empowerment
- De-escalation

MEET MICHAEL

Michael is 15 and repeating the ninth grade. He’s in your world history class and habitually tilts his chair back and drums annoyingly on his desk with a pencil. This morning, he was doing it—again—while you were trying to teach.

A punitive response might mean taking away the pencil, kicking Michael out of class, or even referring him for disciplinary action.

A trauma-informed response would shift the reaction in important ways. It would mean adopting a social emotional lens and shifting thinking to consider what might be causing the behavior.
MEET MICHAEL: SHIFTING TO A TRAUMA-INFORMED RESPONSE

Shift 1: Adopt a social-emotional lens
What does Michael’s tapping say about his mood? Is he bored or frustrated? Does the tapping bother other students, or just me?

Shift 2: Know your students and develop your cultural competency
Has something happened in Michael’s community that might be contributing to his behavior?

Shift 3: Plan and deliver effective student instruction
For instance, what kinesthetic or rhythmic learning strategies might engage Michael?

Shift 4: Move the paradigm from punishment to development
Determine what initial expectations Michael can meet--like not drumming for 10 minutes.

Shift 5: Resist the criminalization of school behavior
Consider the consequences Michael will face if he misses class because he is suspended.

Source: https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/spring-2013/a-teachers-guide-to-rerouting-the-pipeline

IN PAIRS...

TYPE OF BEHAVIOR: Lateness or Truancy
Michael is frequently absent from or tardy to his first-period class and is failing.

Shift 1: Adopt a social-emotional lens
How can I address Michael’s feeling of powerlessness so he is less defensive when I redirect him?

Shift 2: Know your students and develop your cultural competency
How might my words, tone, and body language make Michael feel respected or disrespected?

Shift 3: Plan and deliver effective student instruction
How can I differentiate my instruction to better meet Michael’s needs and tap into his strengths?

Shift 4: Move the paradigm from punishment to development
How can I use direct and gentle communication to demonstrate empathy, explain disappointment, and set expectations for changed behavior?

Shift 5: Resist the criminalization of school behavior
What are the consequences for Michael if he misses class or gets suspended?

Source: https://www.tolerance.org/magazine/spring-2013/a-teachers-guide-to-rerouting-the-pipeline
Video created at ART 180, as part of the Performing Statistics project.

Incarcerated youth worked with local filmmakers OK Keyes, Elizabeth Williams, Ben Surber, and Craig Zirpolo to create a short video public service announcement to respond to the question, “How can we keep kids free?”

Find out more information at: performingstatistics.org

https://vimeo.com/channels/keepkidsfree/180653709

“When you plant lettuce, if it does not grow well, you don’t blame the lettuce. You look for reasons it is not doing well. It may need fertilizer, or more water, or less sun. You never blame the lettuce.”

--Thich Nhat Hanh
THANKS FOR COMING!

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