



GOALS



The School Justice Partnership (SJP) is a group of community stakeholders from schools, law enforcement, and the court system who develop and implement effective strategies to address student misconduct within the school system and the community rather than by a referral to the justice system. As the “convener,” the chief district court judge brings key stakeholders together and chairs meetings but is an equal participant in the process. A successful SJP requires commitment from a diverse group of local leaders.



ABOUT

Statewide implementation of SJPs is an important component of successful implementation of North Carolina’s Raise the Age legislation.

The School Justice Partnership North Carolina (SJP) program is managed by the North Carolina Judicial Branch’s Administrative Office of the Courts.
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SCHOOL JUSTICE PARTNERSHIPS (SJPs) ARE BEING DEVELOPED THROUGHOUT THE STATE TO KEEP KIDS IN SCHOOL AND OUT OF COURT.

North Carolina's 2017 Raise the Age law (S.L. 2017-57 § 16D.4.(aa)) authorized the director of the North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts (NCAOC) to establish policies and procedures for chief district court judges and local stakeholders to establish SJPs to help reduce in-school arrests, out-of-school suspensions, and expulsions. Statistics show that contact with the juvenile justice system increases the likelihood that youth will reoffend. The SJP consequently seeks to reduce the use of exclusionary discipline practices, such as suspension, expulsion, and school-based court referrals, which push students out of school and into court.

EACH SJP DEVELOPS AN INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT WHICH ESTABLISHES GUIDELINES FOR ADDRESSING STUDENT MISCONDUCT WITHOUT COURT OR LAW ENFORCEMENT INVOLVEMENT.

Using a graduated response model, the interagency agreement identifies age-appropriate graduated responses that increase in severity as misconduct persists.

Typically, the agreement prohibits a referral to court unless the student has committed a third or subsequent similar offense during the school year and has previously received a "Warning Notice" and a graduated response.

The agreement is limited to minor, nonviolent offenses (called "focus acts"), which are determined by each local SJP.

CURRENT EXCLUSIONARY DISCIPLINE PRACTICES PUSH STUDENTS OUT OF SCHOOL AND INTO COURT FOR MINOR MISCONDUCT.

In North Carolina, school-based referrals make up about 40% of the referrals to the juvenile justice system.

Most of these referrals are for minor, nonviolent offenses. In the 2016–2017 school year, 92% of school-based referrals were for misdemeanors.

RESPONDING TO STUDENT MISCONDUCT WITH EXCLUSIONARY DISCIPLINE PRODUCES NEGATIVE OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS AND SCHOOLS.

Suspension and expulsion increase the risk that students will drop out of school, repeat a grade, and engage in future delinquent conduct. A single suspension can triple the likelihood that a student will enter the juvenile justice system.

Court involvement for minor misconduct increases the likelihood that youth will reoffend, and outcomes worsen with deeper involvement in the system. For example, confinement in a juvenile facility increases the risk that a youth will be rearrested as an adult.

For some students, a school-based referral can lead to a permanent criminal record, which creates barriers to college financial aid, employment, housing, and military eligibility.

EXCLUSIONARY DISCIPLINE PRACTICES DISPROPORTIONATELY IMPACT CERTAIN GROUPS OF STUDENTS.

Youth of color are 2.5 times more likely to be referred to juvenile court and 1.5 times more likely to be placed in secure confinement than white youth.

African-American students are 26% of the overall student population, but receive 57% of suspensions.

Students with disabilities are 13% of the overall student population, but receive 24% of short-term suspensions and 22.5% of long-term suspensions.

Male students are roughly half of the overall student population, but receive 73% of short-term suspensions and 80% of long-term suspensions.

SJPs PRODUCE BETTER OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS AND SCHOOLS BY IMPLEMENTING EVIDENCE-BASED DISCIPLINE STRATEGIES THAT KEEP KIDS IN SCHOOL AND IMPROVE ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT.

Chief Judge Steven Teske of Clayton County, Georgia, implemented an SJP in 2004 that has produced positive results, including:

- 83% decrease in referrals to juvenile court
- 43% decrease in referrals of youth of color to juvenile court
- 24% increase in graduation rates

Following the Teske model, New Hanover County implemented an SJP in November 2015 that has resulted in a 47% decrease in school-based referrals in its first year.

SJPs in Texas and Connecticut based on the Teske model also have produced positive results.

- Early results in Texas showed a 27% decrease in referrals, and two sites in Connecticut experienced reductions of 59% and 87%, respectively.

NCAOC WILL PROVIDE GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT TO LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS TO FACILITATE THE STATEWIDE IMPLEMENTATION OF SJPs.

A collaborative workgroup is developing an "SJP Toolkit" for chief district court judges and other stakeholders which provides resources they will need to implement the SJP and adopt the SJP Interagency Agreement setting out appropriate responses to student misconduct. To learn more about School Justice Partnership North Carolina, visit SJP.nccourts.gov.



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