

## Juvenile Justice Agency Collaboration (JJAC)

### THE CHALLENGE

Youth involved in the juvenile justice system are among those at highest risk of victimization and recidivism. Yet having a criminal history imposes barriers that prevent youth from accessing housing, employment, financial aid, and other services that provide safety and stability, and allow them to positively contribute to society as adults. For example, youth who are detained face a greater risk of not completing high school—and of being incarcerated in the future—than similar youth who are not detained (Aizer and Doyle, 2013).

### THE OPPORTUNITY

The ability to better serve youth involved in the juvenile justice system—including diverting them away from it if appropriate—first requires an understanding of what happens to youth as they interact with and progress through the system. However, a lack of effective coordination mechanisms inhibits the agency staff who interact with youth, such as police, prosecutors, and probation officers, from meaningfully collaborating to provide youth with better care. Though all of them work closely with individual youth, their visibility and impact is often limited to their agency's purview, preventing them from seeing how a youth's case is handled by other agencies, observing the challenges it encounters, and detecting and addressing the systemic barriers to better outcomes.

### OUR APPROACH

In response to this systemic problem, several City of Chicago, Cook County, and State of Illinois agencies established the Juvenile Justice Agency Collaboration (JJAC) in 2015. The JJAC is a cross-jurisdictional partnership between the Chicago Department of Family and Support Services, Chicago Mayor's Office, Chicago Police Department, Chicago Public Schools, Cook County Juvenile Probation and Court Services, Cook County Juvenile Temporary Detention Center, Cook County Public Defender's Office, Cook County State's Attorney's Office, Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice, and Juvenile Justice Division of the Circuit Court of Cook County. The JJAC focuses on reducing violence and improving outcomes for youth in the juvenile justice system, in keeping with the rehabilitative purpose of the Juvenile Court Act (705 ILCS 405/5-101).

The JJAC aims to identify policy best practices and operational opportunities to reduce recidivism, decrease crime, and enhance system equity; test promising approaches and recommend potential policy reforms; and disseminate insights to other key stakeholders, including service providers and public committees. In support of these goals, the University of Chicago Crime Lab is providing technical assistance to the JJAC. Serving as the JJAC's analytic engine, the Crime Lab will link and analyze relevant data and answer key research questions identified by members, with the ultimate goal of improving youth outcomes and increasing agency collaboration.

### NEXT STEPS

JJAC members and the Crime Lab have begun examining patterns of youth arrest, diversion, charging, detention, probation, and re-arrest to understand points of intervention with the greatest potential for helping youth. With a better understanding of current youth experiences and outcomes, informed policymaking across agencies, and rigorous testing and evaluation of intervention strategies, youth will truly have access to a second chance.

### To SUPPORT THIS WORK

To learn more about this work and opportunities to support it, please contact Roseanna Ander, Executive Director of the University of Chicago Crime Lab and Education Lab, at [rander@uchicago.edu](mailto:rander@uchicago.edu).