



2024 Impact Report

FACILITATING REFORM AND LASTING CHANGE



Letter from Our President & CEO

We are grateful for your interest in the Center for Children & Youth Justice (CCYJ). Because interest—and assistance—from people like you helps make our work on behalf of Washington's most vulnerable children possible.

This 2024 year-end report highlights CCYJ's impact over the past twelve months. It also shows how we are positioned to be even more effective in 2025.

After you read it, we hope you will consider renewing your support—or if you are new to CCYJ, joining our community. The coming year is sure to bring new challenges as well as new opportunities. It is important to us to have you on our side. So, thank you.

A handwritten signature in white ink that reads "Rachel Sottile". The signature is fluid and cursive.

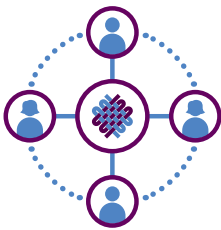
Rachel Sottile
President & CEO



Center for Children & Youth Justice

The Center for Children and Youth Justice (CCYJ) is the only statewide organization focused solely on reforming Washington state's child welfare and youth legal systems. Since its founding nearly 20 years ago, CCYJ has pioneered, developed, and advocated for countless innovations that have led to more compassionate, equitable, and effective support for Washington children, youth, and families.

We are able to realize these improvements in health, safety, and well-being not as a direct service agency working with those who need care, but as a partner with service providers, government, the community, and far-sighted philanthropists. We do this by applying three distinct modalities across the entire ecosystem of care:



Facilitating multi-system coordination and collaboration



Providing training and ongoing technical assistance



Advocating for data-driven and youth-centered solutions

The following pages offer evidence of the results—and the promise—of our singular approach.



Not long after she founded CCYJ in 2006, Justice Bobbe J. Bridge (ret.) wrote, “Foster kids who deserve stability and support, not turmoil and more abandonment... youth in the juvenile justice system who deserve tools to succeed, not stereotyping and bureaucratic roadblocks... it is these children who inspired me....”

While much progress has been made since then, too many Washington state children in foster care continue to live in turmoil, and too many youths in our criminal legal system continue to face obstacles to reentry and success.

Justice Bridge's goal in creating CCYJ was to improve the lives of children and youths. But in doing so, she also believed she was helping to ensure a safer, more civil and productive nation: “[W]hen children and youth are given the right chances to succeed,” she wrote, “they become stronger contributors to the social, civic and economic life of our society.”

Justice Bridge's vision continues to guide CCYJ's work. Because all children deserve to feel safe and supported. And a stronger social, civic, and economic environment is a boon to us all.



Norm Maleng Breakfast: Honoring David Zapolsky

The Norm Maleng Breakfast is an important annual event for CCYJ. It's when we all come together to affirm our shared interests, celebrate our successes, and develop funding for the work to come. At this year's breakfast, we honored David Zapolsky, Senior Vice President of Global Public Policy & General Counsel at Amazon.com Inc. David's support for CCYJ at one of the most uncertain times in our history has paid off many times over in better outcomes for vulnerable infants and families across our state.



Unrestricted resources are vital to launching new work at CCYJ. And generous donors are vital to unrestricted funds. We are grateful to David, and to all our supporters, for their confidence in CCYJ and in its ability to make things better for children and families across our state.





Washington, DC, Comes to Washington State

In early September, the Center for Children & Youth Justice welcomed leaders from the US Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs (OJP) to Seattle to commemorate the second anniversary of the \$200 million Community Violence Intervention and Prevention Initiative (CVIPI).

Community Violence Intervention (CVI) is an emerging response to gun violence that complements traditional law enforcement by supporting community-based, credible messengers who draw upon their lived experience to interrupt cycles of violence and help people at risk follow safer, alternative paths. Although research shows CVI is effective, until recently much of this work in King County has taken place with little funding and no recognition. September's announcement is helping to change that.

One year earlier, CCYJ had been tapped to serve as an intermediary organization to both deliver federal resources to grassroots organizations working on the front lines of King County's emerging CVI ecosystem and also help them build their internal, operational capacity. During the event in September, which was attended by OJP's

Acting Assistant Attorney General, Brent J. Cohen, Nancy La Vigne, Director, National Institute of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, and Senior Policy Advisor Eduardo Bocanegra, we had the honor of announcing some of the local organizations that will receive some of the \$4 million in funding and capacity-building support that was announced at the meeting, including our host organization, Urban Family.

"It is a deep privilege to be able to lift up and support our partner organizations in this crucial, life-saving work," says Rachel Sottile, CCYJ's President & CEO. "We are proud of the Department of Justice's trust in us, and we look forward to continuing to be an ally to these remarkable organizations in this critically important process to make our communities safer—not only today, but also in the weeks, months, and years to come."



World Affairs Council

For many years, CCYJ has been a proud partner with the World Affairs Council. Since 1951, the World Affairs Council has sought to advance global understanding and engagement throughout the Puget Sound region.

This fall, a World Affairs Council delegation of juvenile justice system stakeholders from Bolivia, Colombia, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Paraguay, Peru, and Venezuela, visited CCYJ to learn more about our youth justice work in prevention, diversion, and reentry.

CCYJ staff led presentations and a discussion of a range of issues, including:



Primary prevention programs for at-risk youth (such as family support programs, after-school activities, truancy and dropout prevention programs, and job training programs);



Early interventions of schools, community-based organizations, and faith based groups to prevent delinquency and gang involvement among at-risk youth;



Support services for gang-involved youth and their families that encourage youth to make positive choices; and



Re-entry programs for gang members who have been recently released from prison.



“It’s great to be able to foster learning and collaboration beyond Washington state, and even the United States,” says William “Billy” Hairston, who leads CCYJ’s Leadership, Intervention & Change Program (LINC). “There’s so much for us to share. And it’s an opportunity for us to learn new ideas and perspectives as well.”

CCYJ's founder, Justice Bobbe J. Bridge (ret.) believed in opening pathways for aspiring advocates of system reform. Justice Bridge mentored hundreds of young people, and when she retired in 2018, an internship fund was established in her name. The Bobbe Bridge Internship Fund supports up to five paid internships every year—from high school, college, graduate, and law students seeking their first exposure to systems change to retired adults wanting to stay active and give back. This year's internships are underway! Get to know some of the 2024 internship program participants:



Millie

"I met Justice Bridge at a University of Michigan alumni event during my senior year of high school; she explained to me the work done at CCYJ and connected me with the organization. This is my second summer on the Impact Team. I have seen how intricate connections across the community come together to help young people, and I hope to hold with me the same passion for bringing stakeholders together to create good."



Xochitl

"I came to CCYJ to become involved with the advocacy of youth welfare systems, and I'm currently on the innovation team. I hope to take away much more knowledge and engagement with other organizations, as well as get a better look into how youth welfare systems work and understand their ultimate goals and achievements."



Mele

"After meeting Rachel Sottile, I was inspired and wanted to learn from people who are doing great things for youth. I am interning on the executive team. I hope to learn more about the work and processes in running a non-profit. I would like to take with me the commitment and inspiration CCYJ employees hold in creating better communities for our youth."

Program Overview

CCYJ operates nearly a dozen programs that together address a wide array of issues critical to the wellbeing of children in our state. These range from the Becca Task Force, a statewide collaboration to keep kids in school, eQuality, which is creating safer and more affirming systems of care for LGBTQ+ youth, and Project Respect, a program working to build and sustain a coordinated, statewide victim/survivor-centered response to commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC) and youth labor trafficking, to our Early Childhood Courts, which focus on improving outcomes for families with babies and toddlers in dependency systems, and our role as an intermediary organization building the capacity of culturally responsive organizations serving our most at-risk youth and emerging adults.

Below are highlights of our 2024 achievements, clustered within each of our core modalities:

- facilitating collaboration,
- training and technical assistance (TTA), and
- advocating for new data-driven, youth-centered solutions.



Convening and Collaboration

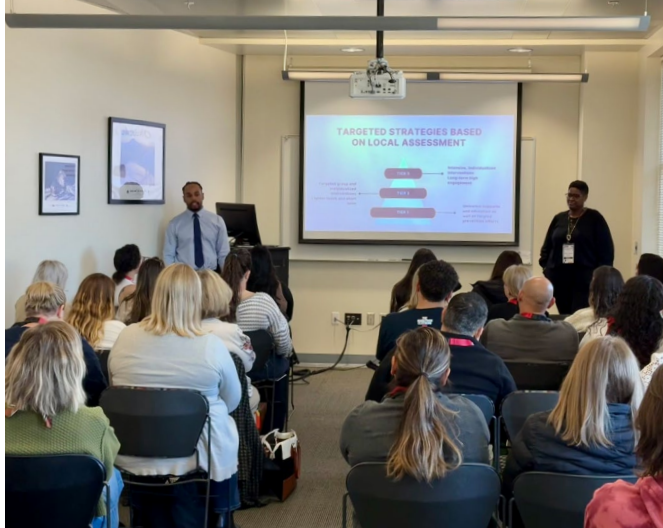
While people and agencies providing direct services to our state's vulnerable children focus on the details of their work, CCYJ is able to step back to assess the bigger picture and consider what can be done to make the system itself work better. A key part of this work involves facilitating convenings of, and collaboration among, system stakeholders, including practitioners, people with lived experience, and government leaders.

In 2024, CCYJ staff and programs led or **participated in 26 statewide commissions**, task forces, and coalitions, and one national council, the Just Response Council.

Several CCYJ programs host their own annual conferences that bring practitioners together from across the state to share needs and learnings and strengthen the connections that are needed to collaborate to improve the systems where they work.



More than 170 people collaborating to address youth group and gang violence in King County attended the third annual Leadership, Intervention, & Change (LINC) Conference in September.



Project Respect

Project Respect, which developed the Washington State Model Protocol for Commercially

Sexually Exploited Children (CSEC) in 2011 and in 2020 **helped pass legislation ending the practice of arresting, charging, and convicting child victims of sex trafficking, hosted a Task Force Leads Meeting in October.** Twelve representatives from seven of the state's 11 regional CSEC Task Forces attended the event, as well as representatives from two developing task forces and statewide CSEC work.



Working alone, our impact is limited to our own capacity. Convening practitioners in the same space—to share knowledge, experience, and agency—can lead to dynamic, transformational change.

 The statewide Becca Task Force, for which CCYJ assumed functional responsibility in 2002, held its 21th annual conference in November.

More than 200 people registered for the conference to share and learn about better ways systems can keep kids engaged in education.

Training and Technical Assistance

Most people charged with supporting our state's most vulnerable children want to be more effective—both individually and at the organizational level. CCYJ training and technical assistance help service providers achieve these goals by providing ongoing support through recurring touch points, meetings, events, and commissions.

In 2024, our program events, trainings, and lunch-and-learn series reached people from more than **70 organizations**. Youth and young people most impacted by our state systems inform our program and policy initiatives and are an integral part of our ongoing program evaluations, performance measures, and quality improvement strategies.

We conducted nearly **45 program activities** each quarter that invite people with lived expertise to engage/inform our work.



Advocating for New Solutions

This year saw the completion of a historic, years-long legislative effort led by CCYJ and a coalition of more than 20 partners—including our state’s Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF) and the Washington state chapter of the nationwide education and child advocacy group Stand for Children.

Under old laws dating back to the 1970s, families of children in the youth legal system were required to pay a percentage of their gross income to help cover the cost of their child’s incarceration. That program, “ParentPay”, placed an additional burden on many families already facing financial hardship. Too often, the result was a vicious cycle that kept families impoverished and entrenched in the juvenile legal system.

Our coalition began educating lawmakers in 2021 about ParentPay’s disparate impacts on families and youth of color, and in early 2022 state lawmakers responded by ending the program and eliminating nearly **\$41 million in outstanding debts**. A year later, in 2023, we helped pass legislation that made Washington the 6th state in the nation to stop placing fines and fees on system-involved young people.



This year, in 2024, our Fines & Fees Coalition helped pass ESSB 5974, a “clean up” from the last session that made null and void any pre-existing debt from fines and fees, other than restitution.

In removing this debt, Washington state is removing significant barriers to housing, education, and employment for system-involved young people.

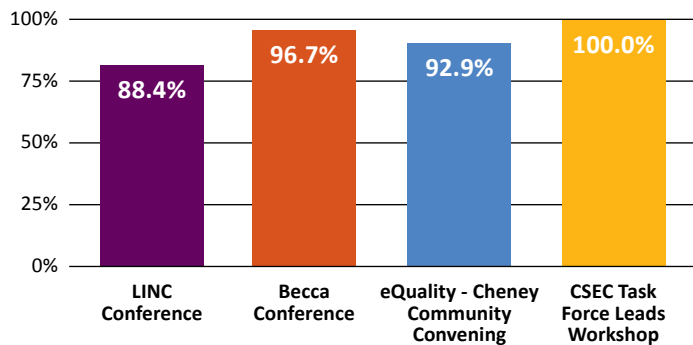
Our coalition’s persistent, years-long commitment represents a huge victory—not only for justice, but also for economic opportunity. Freeing young people and their families from unfair and counter-productive financial obligations effectively sets them on a new path toward self-sufficiency and freedom from future system involvement.



Testimonials

New Skills or New Ideas Learned?

Percent of respondents who **learned new skills**, or developed new ideas, that they can **directly apply** to their work in the **next six months**



“When I have an idea or a proposal that I think would be beneficial beyond the county borders, my first call is to my supervisor. My second call is to CCYJ to see if partnership or taking the work statewide is possible. It is not uncommon for me to have an idea, a wish, a hope that is beyond my scope of work. CCYJ has always taken that idea, brainstormed, and then led the work statewide.”

– Kelly J Mangiaracina, Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC) Policy and Program Manager, King County

Thanks for bringing all these stakeholders together! Super useful to hear about their work and ways we can utilize each other to better serve our mutual clients. – LINC Conference Attendees

I really enjoyed the conference. It was my first one and I will definitely come back. Such great info.

– Becca Conference Attendees

“CCYJ has championed quality care, equity, and compassion for those working with families. One such example is their advocacy to create and implement early childhood courts. CCYJ secured funding to help implement this work in different communities throughout Washington... Without their efforts, our community would not be able to offer these additional resources to our families, which has absolutely had a positive impact.”

– Shauna McCloskey, Therapeutic Specialty Courts Coordinator, Clark County Superior Court

“CCYJ’s convenings are great at providing opportunities to learn about services in the community, and they encourage open sharing. Their staff bring in different viewpoints, always with careful consideration of human rights. They are kind, human-centered individuals who listen to the voices of survivors and community and represent them well.”

– Cameron Norton, Missing and Exploited Youth Program Manager, Washington State Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF)

Looking Forward ▶▶▶▶

For nearly two decades, through many changes in politics and priorities, CCYJ’s work has been a constant source of progress in Washington state policies and practices affecting vulnerable young people and families—from creating more accepting and effective system responses to LGBTQ youth and more effective strategies to combat youth sex and labor trafficking, to helping establish better responses to serve infants in foster care and new ways to interrupt cycles of violence among young people. Yet, because too many youths and families still do not have the stability and opportunity that Justice Bridge envisioned when she founded CCYJ, there remains much more to do. We continue to do this work, and at the same high level of effectiveness. More than ever, we will need help to ensure we can do that. Children and families living on the margins of society do not go away just because political winds begin blowing from another direction. Your help can ensure that CCYJ will continue serving children and families, system stakeholders, and all residents of Washington state. Together, we can continue building a better future for Washington state children.



300 Elliott Avenue W, Suite 360, Seattle, WA 98119 | supportccyj@ccyj.org | 206-696-7503

 facebook.com/ccyj.wa

 instagram.com/ccyj_wa

 twitter.com/ccyj_wa