



In Pursuit of Justice

2025 IMPACT REPORT



Letter from Our President & CEO

Every fall, staff from the Center for Children & Youth Justice (CCYJ) step away from their work to review our impact over the past year—the events CCYJ has convened, the trainings we have led, our successful legislative initiatives, and most of all, the children and families whose lives this organization has helped. The information we gather together becomes our annual Impact Report.

This year, however, was different. Yes, we continued to hold convenings, provide training and technical assistance, and spearhead needed advocacy. But anyone following the news—here in Washington State and from Washington, DC—knows that 2025 was a year unlike any other.

This is why our 2025 year-end report, in addition to reviewing CCYJ's impact on issues and communities, also reviews the impacts that we have experienced.

Most notably, the winds now blowing from our east do not favor many of the things we hold dear. They would inhibit the words we use. They threaten punishment for services tailored for specific groups in need or for those facing distinct challenges. Without warning or explanation, grants for crucial, life-saving initiatives have been unilaterally and summarily withdrawn.

Our allies and supporters know these developments cannot dampen CCYJ's commitment. We continue to be guided by our principles, vision, resilience, and love. Many of us have worked harder in 2025 than ever. Despite trimmed staff and resources, we are persevering.

With your ongoing partnership, we will continue providing crucial support and leadership all across our state, until the winds change and are once again at our backs.

Thank you for standing with us—and for standing with Washington's most vulnerable children and youth in this time of urgent need.

Rachel Sottile
President & CEO

2025's Impact on CCYJ



Eight months ago, in April, our CEO, Rachel Sottile, received an extraordinary, late afternoon email from the Department of Justice (DOJ) in Washington, DC.

It was a terse message notifying us that two existing multi-year grants—\$4 million in funding for capacity-building support to reverse the pandemic-era spike in gun violence among King County youth and children, and \$2 million in funding for youth group and gang violence desistance work—were being immediately and totally withdrawn.

That email was extraordinary only because it was unprecedented in our history; as it turns out, hundreds of other organizations across the nation received nearly identical notification at about the same time. Altogether, more than \$800 million in programming grants, nationwide, were eliminated in a matter of days.

CCYJ lost more than one-third of its annual budget as a result of that email, and had to part with some of its staff. But we were fortunate in the philanthropic leaders who enabled us to carry on the Community Violence Intervention (CVI) work—albeit at a reduced level. Other organizations, here and across the country, were not as lucky. Many have closed their doors completely.

The generous support we received also empowered us to join with four other organizations from across the nation—Stop AAPI Hate, FORCE Detroit, Health Resources in Action, and the Vera Institute of Justice—to file a class-action suit against the Department of Justice. Our goal is not simply to restore our funding, but also to see all \$800 million restored.

That suit, still winding through the court system, keeps us optimistic that in time justice will be served.

As you know, support from the private sector and philanthropy is crucial, whether we are sparking new ideas, trying out new strategies, or challenging unlawful and dangerous grant terminations. However, only the government has the capacity, credibility, and authority to bring change to scale. Thousands of kids and families in Washington State, and perhaps hundreds of thousands more across the county, are depending on this.



We believe that we can
change and impact lives of
more young people with you.



“Our vision is that all children, youth, and young adults are healthy, safe and thriving; cared for by their community; valued as they are; and have a sense of belonging.”

– From CCYJ’s Vision Statement

Three Modalities

All children, youth, and young adults deserve to be safe, cared for, and given an opportunity to thrive.

When she founded the Center for Children & Youth Justice nearly 20 years ago, our founder, Justice Bobbe J. Bridge (ret.) knew that delivering on this vision would require collecting and paying rigorous attention to data. To this day, CCYJ relies on facts, not ideology or good intentions, to drive our reforms.

Over the years, we have also recognized how youths’ differing life experiences can lead to different varieties of challenges. Our own experience and a growing body of research show that becoming sensitive to these differences can help youth-serving systems realize

improvements in quality of life and outcomes. This is why CCYJ embraces practical innovations like cultural competence, trusted messengers, and SOGIE (sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression).

Insights such as these are central to our work as the only statewide organization focused solely on reforming Washington’s child welfare and youth legal systems. Equally fundamental is understanding that this process must be inclusive; everyone within the ecosystem has something to contribute. Our role focuses on providing three distinct services:

Training and Technical Assistance

Child-serving agency staff who provide direct support to vulnerable children, youth, and families want to be more effective—individually and at the organizational level. CCYJ offers targeted and customized support, training, and technical assistance to help service providers realize their aspirations.

Initiative for Safe & Affirming Care

CCYJ’s Initiative for Safe & Affirming Care seeks to ensure the health, safety, and well-being of youth in child welfare, youth justice, and related systems of care by cultivating holistic and individualized services and support. Encompassing all aspects of youths’ identity ensures that system professionals, contracted providers, caregivers, and volunteers will support every youth with respect to their SOGIE, which is critical to health, safety, and well-being.



National Indian Child Welfare Association
Protecting Our Children • Preserving Our Culture

National Indian Child Welfare Conference

At the National Indian Child Welfare (NICWA) conference held in Orlando, Florida, in April, staff from CCYJ, NICWA, and both the Lummi Nation and Makah Tribe tribal organizations hosted a panel presentation titled “Exploring Implementation of the Safe Babies Approach for a Tribal Court System: Washington State Case Example”.

Multi-system Coordination and Collaboration

Agencies and individuals deeply immersed in the details of supporting vulnerable children and families often lack opportunities to step back from their work to ask, "How could we do this better?" By hosting convenings and facilitating collaboration and reflection among system stakeholders, CCYJ creates spaces where practitioners, affected individuals, communities, and government leaders come together to discuss and advance system-level improvements.



The annual LINC conference, in September, drew **over 200 attendees**

who serve young people impacted by community violence and the juvenile justice system—that’s more than three times as many that attended the first LINC conference three years ago. Experts representing education, justice, and community from across the region provided new information, training, and development to professional and community members who support young people in their pursuit of successful post-secondary pathways, careers, and civic engagement.

A special highlight this year was a panel titled “Women Leading Change: Confronting Violence, Building Hope”, a powerful conversation showcasing the leadership and lived experiences of women driving change in the community violence intervention space.

“The panel is my absolute favorite part of the conference each year. The collective knowledge and insight is really inspiring for the work we do. Helps me feel renewed in my work and purpose.”

– LINC attendee



to Central Washington University in November to participate in the two-day Becca Conference. The Washington State Becca Task Force is a multidisciplinary statewide organization founded to help schools, courts, and service providers carry out the mandatory school attendance and at-risk youth laws known as “Becca laws.” CCYJ and the Becca Task Force have been co-hosting the annual Becca Conference since 2004, bringing stakeholders together to train, network, share best practices, and discuss issues and solutions related to the Becca Laws.

“This is by far my favorite conference I have attended so far. The presentations were engaging, I learned a lot, and I made good connections.”

– BECCA attendee



Litigation: Vera Institute of Justice v. U.S. Department of Justice

In 2023, the US Department of Justice tapped CCYJ to serve as an intermediary to deliver federal resources and capacity-building to grassroots organizations working on the front lines of King County’s emerging Community Violence Intervention (CVI) ecosystem. In April of this year, we were one of hundreds of organizations across the nation to have our federal funding cut off—entirely and without regard to the law. CCYJ joined with four other groups from across the nation and filed suit on behalf of the entire class. As our President & CEO, Rachel Sottile, wrote in an op-ed in the *Seattle Times*, “Fighting these cuts is the right thing to do. Community safety and countless lives, here and across the country, depend on it.”



CCYJ Receives Adam Smith Award

In August, US Congressman Adam Smith recognized the Center for Children & Youth Justice with a 2025 Champions of Justice Award—which is given each year to individuals who have made significant contributions to Washington’s 9th Congressional District. In presenting the award to our CEO, Rachel Sottile, Rep. Smith pointed to both CCYJ’s record of accomplishment in reforming the state’s child welfare and juvenile justice systems, and to our ongoing commitment and resilience in the face of federal uncertainty.



“It was a true honor to accept this award on behalf of our staff, our partners—including young people and families, and our supporters,” Rachel said, following the ceremony.

Advocating for Data-Driven, Youth-Centered Solutions

Sometimes it becomes necessary to change the law to achieve widespread improvements in services and outcomes. CCYJ joins with like-minded partners, advocates, and lawmakers to propose and promote improvements that are supported by data and informed by the lived experience of children, youth, and families.



SB 5149, “Expanding the Early Childhood Court Program”

On April 22, Washington State governor Bob Ferguson signed the “Expanding the Early Childhood Court Program” bill, SB 5149. The new law allows Early Childhood Courts to enroll families with children under the age of 6. This change is expected to increase enrollment in the program and expand support for parents as they navigate dependency systems.



LINC Listening Sessions

LINC hosted a series of listening sessions to provide elected officials clear, consolidated information about existing services and supports for youth impacted by violence in King County. These were a critical opportunity for policymakers to hear directly from those working on the ground about barriers that hinder progress and perpetuate harm to young people.



Ongoing Partnership with the World Affairs Council

The Center for Children & Youth Justice was once again proud to partner with the World Affairs Council, which has been advancing global understanding and engagement in the Puget Sound region since 1951. This year, as part of the Council’s Global Leadership Exchange, we hosted a visit from a representative of the national police force of Scotland.

Grant Trainer, a constable with Police Scotland’s Children and Young People team, studies how trauma-informed approaches can reduce justice

system involvement among children and youth. He met with CCYJ’s Impact and Innovation teams to explore collaborative approaches to relationship building, early intervention, community engagement, and multi-agency support.

Participating in the Global Leadership Exchange is a special opportunity to share ideas and experience and to highlight new ways to support the well-being of children and youth—both in Scotland, and here in Washington State.

Special Appeals

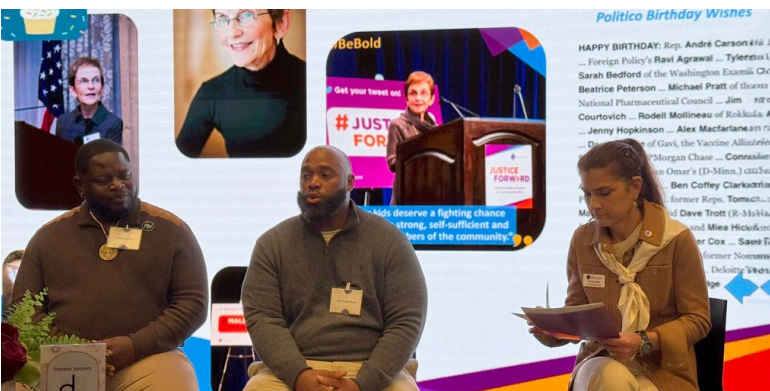
Rainbows and Resilience

In May, to forward our work on behalf of LGBTQ+ youth in the foster care and juvenile legal systems, CCYJ hosted Rainbows & Resilience—a successful fundraising event that was both a celebratory kick-off to the 56th year of Pride Month and a somber reminder of why this work is so important.

"Whatever social ill drives you," Nicholas Oakley, CCYJ's Senior Director for Public Policy and TTA told the audience, "you will almost certainly see it play out for these young people: family rejection, homelessness, violence, healthcare disparities, discrimination, isolation, and marginalization. ... It is not because of who these youth are, but because of what they experience as a result of being who they are."

Rising For Reform

In 2024 community partners in the Leadership, Intervention & Change (LINC) program provided more than 270 youth impacted by community violence with services that are proven to decrease gang activity and improve school attendance. But like so many other organizations that lost federal funding in April, we were forced to reduce our capacity and now rely entirely on private contributions to fund LINC activities. At our "Rising for Reform" fundraiser, in October, guests learned about how CCYJ and our partners are making a difference and actions they can take to sustain our vital LINC work.



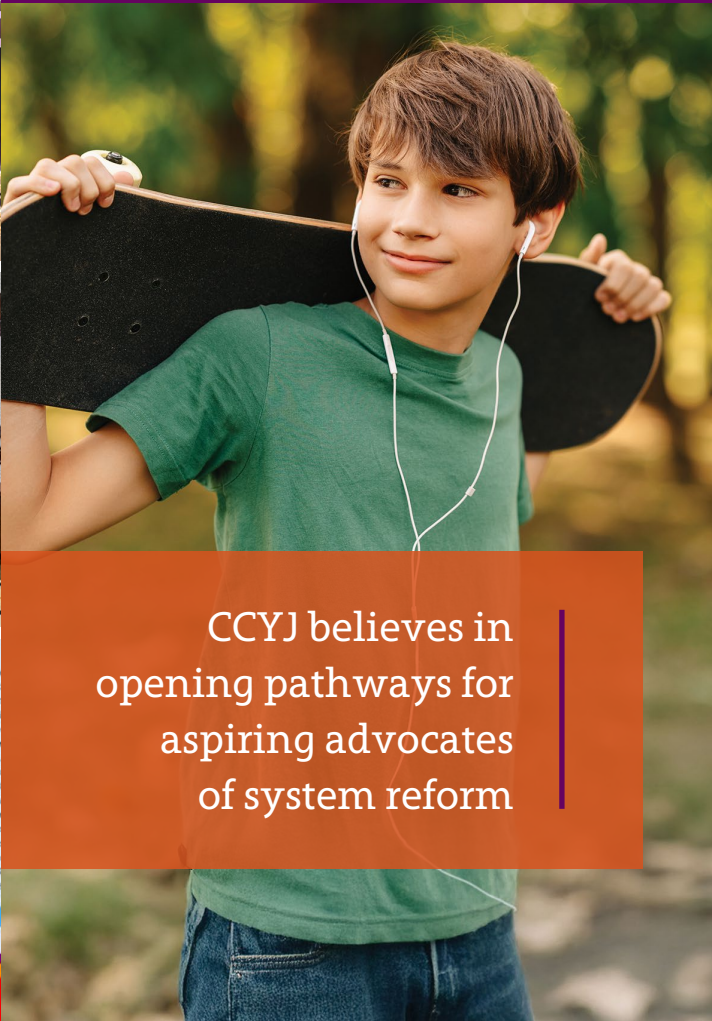
Center for Children & Youth Justice Interns

CCYJ's Founder, Justice Bobbe J. Bridge (ret.) mentored hundreds of young people throughout her career. 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. CCYJ welcomed four interns in 2025, including one who worked with us the entire year.



Madison Ray served as a Policy and Communications Intern for the full 2024-2025 school year while she was completing dual bachelor's degrees in Political Science and Law, Societies, and Justice from the University of Washington. Her biggest takeaway, she said, was learning the importance of being adaptable.

"As the organization navigated the termination of two federal grants, which led to internal restructuring, I was in a position to reassess my responsibilities and show interest and enthusiasm in other areas of work. A month later, with the support and trust of my coworkers, I extended my contract with the opportunity to contribute across various departments. I gained exposure to different aspects of the organization's work and garnered insight into how nonprofit organizations operate during times of uncertainty."



CCYJ believes in opening pathways for aspiring advocates of system reform



Isabel: Development and Communications Intern

"Having the opportunity to work here has been amazing. The work culture has been so great to be a part of, and I've learned so much about the operations of a nonprofit."



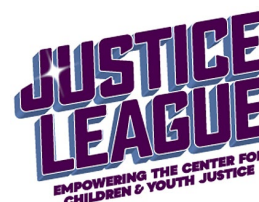
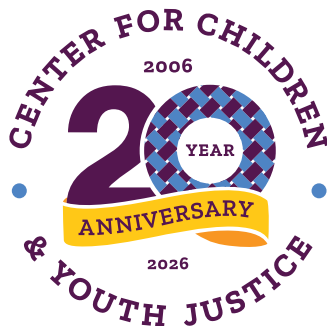
Shania: Impact Team Intern

"CCYJ has been a very welcoming and positive environment. I was honored to meet such amazing people who do impactful work."



Serena: Impact Team Intern

"CCYJ has offered me the opportunity to develop professional skills that I will bring into my future."



We're changing the way young people experience the child welfare and juvenile justice systems—for the better.



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

