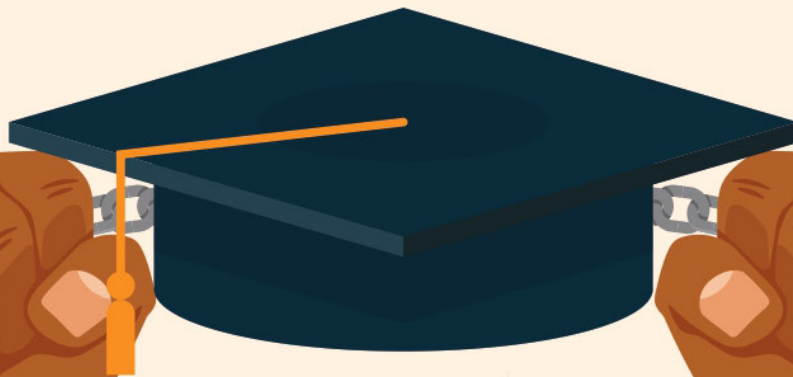


MIAMI-DADE ECONOMIC ADVOCACY TRUST

THE SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE AN EXAMINATION OF YOUTH ARREST PATTERNS AND PRACTICES IN MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS TO
ADDRESS DISPROPORTIONATE ARRESTS
OF BLACK YOUTH IN MIAMI-DADE COUNTY



SCAN TO ACCESS TRENDS IN
MIAMI-DADE COUNTY YOUTH ARRESTS:
2010-2022
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SHAPING PERSPECTIVES: HIGHLIGHTS FROM TRENDS IN YOUTH ARRESTS IN MIAMI-DADE COUNTY 2010 - 2022*

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM DATA ANALYSES:

1. Overall, youth arrests in Miami-Dade County have decreased by **76%** since 2010.
2. The total number of youths arrested has decreased by **81%** since 2010.
3. Differences in arrest rates between Black youth and White-Latinx and White Non-Latinx youth have decreased by **63%** and **65%** respectively since 2010.
4. The percentage of Black youth arrested is consistently higher and disproportionate to the population of Black youth in Miami-Dade County. While Black youth represent about **17 - 18%** of the 10-17-year-old population in Miami-Dade County, they account for **58%** of all youth arrests since 2010 and **63%** of arrests in 2022.
5. Arrests of Black male youths accounted for **48%** of all arrests in Miami-Dade County during the thirteen-year period and **52%** of arrests in 2022 despite accounting for only **9%** of the 10-17-year-old youth population. Furthermore, in 2022, arrest rates of Black female youth were higher than both White Latinx males and White Non-Latinx males.
6. Black youth were much more likely to be arrested and re-arrested compared to White Latinx and White Non-Latinx youth.
7. The pattern of racial disproportionality in arrests was found for all charge types, charge severity, and warrants issued (pick-up orders).
8. Only a small percentage of youth arrests (**6%**) consisted of youth residing outside of Miami-Dade County.

*** SOURCE: TRENDS IN YOUTH ARRESTS IN MIAMI-DADE COUNTY 2010 - 2022 REPORT PRESENTED TO THE MIAMI-DADE ECONOMIC ADVOCACY TRUST**

★ **REQUIRE A LICENSED MENTAL HEALTH COORDINATOR AT EACH PUBLIC SCHOOL**

Partnering with law enforcement agencies and prioritizing a community-oriented approach will allow mental health coordinators to address the underlying factors contributing to disruptive behavior, thereby reducing the need for punitive measures. Florida statute 1006.12 indicates Safe-school officers at each public school. For the protection and safety of school personnel, property, students, and visitors, each district school board and school district superintendent shall partner with law enforcement agencies or security agencies to establish or assign one or more safe-school officers at each school facility within the district, including charter schools. As identified within the report, overwhelming evidence suggests that increased school officer presence produces adverse outcomes for students without an intervening mental health professional.

★ **ESTABLISH PERMANENT CRIMINAL JUSTICE DISPARITIES TASK FORCES**

Establishing Criminal Justice Disparities Task Forces in municipalities, counties, and broader metropolitan areas is essential for monitoring and addressing disparities in arrest and incarceration rates. By reviewing data regularly and collaborating with stakeholders, these groups can develop recommendations for improvement. The collective effort would allow for updating standards and practices across various jurisdictions, ensuring movement towards equitable treatment throughout the criminal justice system.

★ **PASS THE POLICE QUESTIONING OF JUVENILES ACT**

Socioeconomic and emotional factors play a significant role in legal interactions involving youth. To protect the rights and well-being of juveniles, it is recommended that South Florida adopts a policy similar to California's Welfare and Institutions Code 625.6(a), which requires consultation with an attorney for youths 15 or younger (a) Prior to a custodial interrogation, and before the waiver of any Miranda rights, a youth 17 years of age or younger shall consult with legal counsel in person, by telephone, or by video conference. The consultation may not be waived.

★ **UTILIZE MEDIATION WHERE APPROPRIATE FOR JUVENILE OFFENSES**

A restorative justice approach that emphasizes communication and empathy can transform how we handle cases of juvenile offenses. Implementing trained Florida Florida-certified mediators to facilitate mediation before any interaction with the juvenile justice system can yield significant benefits. These include reducing recidivism rates, improved communication skills and conflict resolution abilities for the offender and the victim, resource savings for the justice system through training existing actors, and increased community engagement and accountability.

★ **IMPLEMENT CONSISTENT HIGH-QUALITY IMPLICIT BIAS TRAINING FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICERS**

Addressing biases among law enforcement officers is crucial to ensure fair treatment and prevent the perpetuation of systemic inequalities. According to the report, "one-time training for cultural competency or implicit bias is much more likely to produce weak effects over time, if any at all." Thus, implementing consistent, high-quality implicit bias training is necessary to equip officers with the tools to effectively recognize and mitigate their biases. This requires police departments to evaluate the effectiveness of their training programs, enlist qualified trainers, and emphasize ongoing training sessions. By providing officers with the necessary skills, language, and strategies, they can implement policies without letting biases influence their actions, translating legislative intentions into real-world practice.

★ **ENSURE HIGH-QUALITY TECH PROGRAMMING IN SCHOOLS**

To reduce vulnerability to criminal behavior and increase the viability of future economic prospects, it is essential to offer high-quality computer science and other tech-oriented programming in schools. Prioritizing access to science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (S.T.E.M.) training and certifications, especially for marginalized communities disproportionately targeted for incarceration, can establish alternative career pathways and break cycles of poverty and crime. Equipping students with valuable skills for well-paying jobs in the tech sector empowers them to navigate towards a positive future.

★ **EMBED MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING INTO EARLY INTERVENTION PROGRAMMING**

Early intervention is crucial for at-risk students to prevent behaviors that may lead to arrest and involvement in the criminal justice system. By embedding mental health counseling within early intervention programs, underlying mental health issues can be identified and addressed, reducing the likelihood of harmful coping mechanisms or engagement in illegal activities. This requires policymakers to allocate personnel, training, and infrastructure resources to meet the demand for mental health services. Investing in prevention rather than reactive measures, such as incarceration, yields long-term savings and improves overall well-being.

✦ **REQUIRE TRADE CERTIFICATIONS IN HIGH SCHOOLS**

By requiring schools to offer trade certifications alongside traditional diplomas, students can gain practical skills and industry-recognized credentials, expanding their career readiness. To implement this policy effectively, it is crucial to collaborate with industry stakeholders and develop standardized certification programs. High schools should partner with local businesses, trade unions, and vocational training centers to create relevant curriculum frameworks. These partnerships will ensure that certifications align with current industry demands and are valued by employers. Offering a wide range of trade options, such as construction, automotive, and healthcare, will provide students with diverse choices for their future careers.

✦ **CREATE A UNIVERSAL PUBLIC OPTION FOR EARLY LEARNING**

The report identifies "access to quality early childhood education" as a point of racial and ethnic disparities. A universal, publicly funded option for early learning is essential to address the educational inequalities contributing to the school-to-prison pipeline. By ensuring access to high-quality early education for all children, regardless of socioeconomic background, we can target the root causes of this pervasive issue. Investing in early learning has lifelong benefits for children, facilitating cognitive, social, and emotional development. It also helps to address inequities in the quality and availability of services by removing income thresholds that often leave families unable to access crucial educational resources. Collaboration with higher education institutions, incentives for educators, and standardized and aligned systems are necessary to facilitate this change.

✦ **EXPAND THE FLORIDA VOLUNTARY PREKINDERGARTEN EDUCATION PROGRAM (V.P.K.) FROM 3 DAILY INSTRUCTION HOURS TO 8 HOLISTIC SERVICE HOURS.**

Expanding the coverage of Florida's Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program (V.P.K.) by increasing the daily instruction hours from 3 to 8 hours for 4-year-olds would enhance early childhood development, improve school readiness, and provide a strong foundation for future academic success. To implement this expansion, allocating additional funding through state appropriations, grants, and public-private partnerships is crucial while collaborating with schools, preschools, and community organizations. Professional development for V.P.K. teachers, enriched curriculum, and an assessment system to monitor student progress should also be implemented. By expanding the V.P.K. program to 8 hours of daily instruction, Florida can provide enhanced educational opportunities for 4-year-olds, better preparing them for future academic success and setting a strong foundation for their lifelong learning journey.

✦ **CREATE NON-POLICE FIRST RESPONDER PROGRAMS**

Recognizing that a police officer is the first point of contact for most youth who enter the juvenile system, the creation of a Non-Police First Responder Program entails the allocation of necessary funds for the deployment of teams of social workers, paramedics, and mental health professionals to non-violent public health-related calls. These programs aim to enhance public safety by prioritizing de-escalation and appropriate intervention over relying solely on law enforcement. They build community trust by fostering positive relationships between responders and community members. These programs aim to reduce over-policing and unnecessary criminalization by diverting individuals in crisis to appropriate resources.

✦ **PASS THE "REDUCING RACIAL AND ETHNIC DISPARITIES IN THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM ACT" (INTRODUCED IN 2022 BY U.S. SENATOR SHELDON WHITEHOUSE)**

The legislation would allow Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Program assistance to be used to reduce racial and ethnic disparities and for other purposes. The current draft of the bill calls for "a plan to implement systems for identifying and recording youth data disaggregated by race and ethnicity.... and providing support for "programs seeking to reduce racial and ethnic disparities at any decision point, such as at the point of arrest, referral to court, diversion, secure detention, judicial waiver to adult criminal court, case petitioning, delinquency finding or adjudication, probation, or residential placement, including secure confinement, including prevention, diversion, community supervision, and other programs that provide linguistically and culturally responsive support and services to youth." As outlined by the report, the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice currently utilizes the Relative Rate Index (R.R.I.) tool to "assess the relative overrepresentation of minority groups at several important decision points in the juvenile justice continuum" However, the utilization of such tool does not reflect a concerted effort to reduce the disparities at each decision point.