

# PUBLIC FEEDBACK REPORT NO. 1

---

JUVENILE INTERVENTION AND  
FAITH-BASED FOLLOW-UP (JIFF)  
PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS  
FOCUS GROUP  
OCTOBER 23, 2014

Countywide Juvenile Justice Consortium (CJJC), Shelby County, Tennessee



# BACKGROUND

DATE/TIME OF MEETING: October 23, 2014, 5:30 p.m.

LOCATION: 254 South Lauderdale Street, Memphis, Tennessee, 38126

CJJC ATTENDEES: Jeremy Calhoun, Jhukuruin Corley, Michelle Fowlkes, Bishop Mays, Mickey Williams

OTHER NON-PUBLIC ATTENDEES: Eight teenage males (aged 16-19) who had been placed in the Detention Center at Juvenile Court (“Court”) for periods ranging from one to seven weeks and who participated in the JIFF program

## OVERVIEW

The attending CJJC members met with the aforementioned teenage males (“attendees”) about their experience with the Court after being charged with one or more delinquent acts.

Initially, the attendees were asked about whether they continued to have any future court dates and about other preliminary detention matters. None of them had any court dates after they were released from detention. Two of them had had their last contact with the Court within the past six months, five of them within the past year, and one had not had any contact with the Court in over a year. Most of them advised having had a public defender appointed to represent them at their first court appearance. All of them received legal representation during the pendency of their cases. Half of them advised that they remembered being advised of their Miranda Rights. All of them were encouraged to call family members, and some of their attorneys helped facilitate this. A majority of them (seven out of eight) advised that they had other family or household members who had been detained at the Court in the past.

The attendees advised that girls are becoming more involved in gangs and committing more crimes because they do not draw as much suspicion and because they are sometimes willing to “take charges” for males due to a perception that they will receive lighter treatment by the system. Most felt that tougher penalties and fines on parents would make kids go to school. One reason offered for this is that they thought their peers would become worried about their parents having less money to buy them things.

The CJJC members asked the young men about their educational background. Seven of them were still in high school, and they advised that they were on track to graduate. The oldest JIFF attendee, a nineteen-year-old, did not finish high school but wanted to get

**Countywide Juvenile Justice Consortium (CJJC), Shelby County, Tennessee**



his GED. Three of them attended schools that they sensed were “too quick” in sending students to the Court when problems arose, and five of them felt they attended schools that took some time to try to handle problem situations “in house” before referring a student to the Court. All of them agreed that smarter students and those who studied more seemed to get picked on more. They believed that this made peer pressure one of the hardest hurdles to overcome for students who wanted to achieve academically. In their opinion, many kids attended school to hang out, shoot dice, “gang bang”, and impress girls/boys. They did not go to learn anything. All of them advised that the HOPE Academy made the day go by faster. They enjoyed the teachers, who assisted them in getting any of their course work and grades (while in detention) transferred back to their home school.

The JIFF attendees were asked about their treatment during their contact with the Court. Three of them advised that they remembered being told that they could talk to someone about it. One stated that he felt that he was treated more harshly than a white detainee. Four stated that they felt that they were treated no differently than anyone else. Three stated that they could not perceive a differential treatment in race because they were detained when the entire detention population was made up of black males. One attendee commented that he felt that black youth were treated more harshly because they did not tend to comply with instructions and further that they did not seem to respect authority or their parents as much as white kids did. Most felt that the judges handled their cases depending on the type of crime committed and the record of the juvenile being accused. One attendee advised that he felt judges were easier on white kids with regard to drug charges because the white kids were perceived as users while black kids were perceived as sellers.

## ISSUES AND CONCERNS

The JIFF attendees were asked about their stay in detention, and most of them advised feeling safe during their stay. Some of them had the following complaints about their experiences while in detention:

- Perceived invasion of personal space during search/pat down at intake
- Transporting officer driving recklessly and texting while driving
- Isolation with no phone calls
- A notion of the whole group suffering consequences (i.e. no movies) due to bad acts of one or two juveniles
- The bed blankets were itchy and did not provide enough warmth
- The soap and lotion gave some of them a rash
- A lack of privacy during bathroom time
- The hot water was not always working

**Countywide Juvenile Justice Consortium (CJJC), Shelby County, Tennessee**



- Not getting enough to eat and feeling hungry a lot
- Multiple kids in one holding cell while other cells remained empty
- Sometimes not enough staff were present to control situations.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

None at this time.

Approved:  
Countywide Juvenile Justice Consortium  
April 24, 2015

Countywide Juvenile Justice Consortium (CJJC), Shelby County, Tennessee

