

# PENNSYLVANIA JUVENILE TASK FORCE

## October 14, 2020 Meeting Executive Summary

On October 14, 2020, the Pennsylvania Juvenile Justice Task Force convened its ninth meeting, led by Task Force co-chairs Senator Lisa Baker, Senator Jay Costa, Representative Mike Zabel, and Representative Tarah Toohil. The co-chairs provided an update on stakeholder engagement and then the Task Force reviewed an analysis of state and federal data about youth referrals to law enforcement in schools. Following the data discussion, the Task Force heard from Dr. Elizabeth Cauffman, professor of psychological science, education and law at the University of California, Irvine, about adolescent brain development and juvenile justice. The meeting concluded with a discussion of logistical next steps and public testimony.

### Stakeholder Engagement

#### *Stakeholder Roundtables*

The co-chairs reported that the Task Force has hosted eighteen stakeholder roundtables thus far in the process, with more in the works and that executive summaries for each of the roundtables will be shared on the Task Force website.

### System Assessment Data Analysis

#### *Education*

The Task Force reviewed a system assessment and data analysis of data about youth behavior referred to law enforcement in Pennsylvania and nationwide, specifically, when and how schools utilize law enforcement to respond to youth behavior. The following were the key takeaways:

- Various state and local entities may guide policies influencing schools' law enforcement referrals, but local districts and individual schools have wide latitude.
- State law requires law enforcement referral for a handful of alleged behaviors (local policy varies and may require law enforcement referral for others).
- Schools have various tools they may employ to respond to youth behavior without implicating law enforcement or the courts, but their use is not required and resources may vary.
- Pennsylvania makes school referrals to law enforcement and school-based arrests at a rate 2.7 times the national average and higher than most bordering states, according to federal data

for the 2015-16 school year (the most recent year for which data is available).

- Youth with disabilities are referred to law enforcement at three times the rate of youth without documented disabilities.
- PDE data show school incidents resulting in law enforcement notification are up slightly since 2010, but the share resulting in arrest are down.
- Stark variation exists by county in the share of incidents involving law enforcement (fewer than 15% of incidents involve law enforcement in many counties, while in others, nearly half of all incidents result in notification).
- Whether a youth is arrested when law enforcement is notified varies widely for the same type of infraction.
- The most common incidents leading to law enforcement involvement are fights that did not result in serious injury, drug- and tobacco-related infractions, and disorderly conduct.
- Incidents involving Black and Hispanic youth are the most likely to involve law enforcement among racial and ethnic groups.
- Black girls are three times more likely to be referred to law enforcement than white girls.
- Youth aged 15 and younger make up the majority of incidents where law enforcement is notified.
- For incidents where law enforcement is notified, nearly one-in-five involve youth that are ages 12 and under, and they are generally referred for similar incidents as older youth.

### Presentation on Adolescent Brain Development Research and Public Testimony

[Dr. Elizabeth Cauffman](#) presented research on adolescent brain development and what works best to improve outcomes for youth and public safety. Members of the Task Force then discussed the key findings of Dr. Cauffman's research. Links to Dr. Cauffman's research will be posted to the Task Force website.

The Task Force then heard testimony from youth who are or had been involved with the juvenile justice system. All meeting materials, meeting dates, and links to join meetings are available at the Task Force's website:

<http://www.pacourts.us/pa-juvenile-justice-task-force>