



# Make it Right

## **Make it Right: A New Approach to Juvenile Delinquency in San Francisco**

A **76%** decline in referrals of youth to the juvenile justice system from 1999-2016

In 2016, African American young people represented **67%** of detentions but only **6%** of our population

Additional Resources:

[Community Works West](#)

[Huckleberry Youth Programs](#)

[The Restorative Justice Project at Impact Justice](#)

[Study on Restorative Community Conferencing](#)

In San Francisco, by many measures, data points to a juvenile justice system that is heading in the right direction. From 1999 to 2016, we experienced a 76% decline in referrals of youths to the juvenile justice system, with 50% of that decline occurring in the last seven years. This includes an 85% decline in detentions, leading to a reduction in the juvenile hall average daily population from 119 to 45 young people. It also includes an 83% decline in kids on probation, and a 100% decline in kids sent to California Youth Authority/Department of Juvenile Justice.

But these reductions, while significant, leave us with hard challenges. As we have turned to community-based solutions for lower level offenses, the cases that have remained in our courtrooms are more serious. And as the overall numbers have declined, racial and ethnic disparities in our juvenile justice system have become even more extreme. In 1999, African American young people comprised 49% of referrals and 52% of detentions – already a grossly disproportionate amount in a time when they comprised 13% of the city's population. In 2016, they comprised an even more alarming 59% of referrals and 67% of detentions when only making up 6% of our population.

In this context, the District Attorney has partnered with juvenile justice system stakeholders to launch Make it Right, a restorative justice approach for youths ages 13-17 facing prosecution for an array of felony charges in San Francisco.

### **Restorative Community Conferencing**

Through Make it Right, eligible young people are given the option, before their cases are charged, to participate in “restorative community conferencing”. In this process, the youth comes together with their victim, each with their supporters (including family/caregivers, youth services, schools, coaches, and others) in a community-based facilitated dialogue to develop a plan for the young person to repair harm, address root causes, and make amends. This “agreement”, developed collectively, identifies concrete actions that the youth will take to address harm caused to the victim, the community, the youth's family, and him/herself. The young person has a six-month period in which to follow through on their agreement with support from a community-based case manager. If successful, the case is not prosecuted.

### **Public Private Partnership**

"Make it Right" is operated as a collaboration between the SFDA and two organizations which bring unique expertise to the program: [Community Works West](#), which facilitates the conferences, and [Huckleberry Youth Programs](#), which leverages its extensive knowledge of community-based resources to support the youths as they fulfill their agreements. [The Restorative Justice Project at Impact Justice](#), a national innovation and research center, partnered with the SFDA to launch Make it Right, and provides ongoing technical assistance to the team. Make it Right's operation is made possible through funding from the San Francisco Department of Children, Youth and Their Families and the Zellerbach Family Foundation.

### **Effectiveness**

In order for Make it Right to be a model that provides a meaningful alternative to the traditional juvenile justice system, restorative practices must be evaluated in a deliberate, statistically sound way. Preliminary results indicate that Make it Right significantly reduces recidivism. We are continuing our formal evaluation of the program.

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