



A PROMISE TO 322,000 Futures

Making Philadelphia the Best City
for Raising a Family Clean, Green,
Safe, and Full of Educational and
Economic Opportunity

Embargoed until 10/23/23



Our city's present and future success is inextricably linked to the next mayor's commitment to making Philadelphia the best place in the country to raise the 322,000 children who live here.

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The 322,000 Futures Promise is built on:



Safety where communities have the resources to address the long-term issues giving rise to crime.



Education where students attend clean 21st-century facilities for school, year-round academic and enrichment opportunities, and are connected to jobs or post secondary training before they graduate.



Cleaning and Greening where families have clean parks for ample recreational opportunities, shade cover to keep them healthy, and green schools that reduce the pace of climate change.



Economic Opportunity where families are economically self-sufficient, able to readily rely on child care, income, and other supports that enable them to work and prosper and where no child is separated from their parents because of poverty.

What It Takes to Meet the 322,000 Futures Promise

The next administration must get things done, starting on day one for children. They must work systematically every day to learn from and collaborate with youth, parents, and the professionals across all youth-serving sectors to innovate, and expand, the city's youth-serving infrastructure. They must strengthen the federal and state partnerships needed to ensure every child has the services and supports they need to thrive.

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FOR SAFETY

- ✓ **Support the Philadelphia Police to be laser-focused on tackling gun violence.** Police resources must be devoted to driving down shootings and homicides. However, their attention is often called to mediate low-level infractions from children and youth. School and community-based diversion programs must be expanded so that more young people can be held accountable for actions without entering the criminal justice system.
- ✓ **Embrace a public health strategy in the fight against gun violence.** The trauma of gun violence and poverty weakens the resolve and capacity of far too many youth to believe in, and build, their own future. The city's behavioral health infrastructure must play a central role in building a child and youth mental wellness system that is centered on resiliency and personal assets and that equips youth and their families with the coping and emotional skills needed to prepare children for a fulfilling future.
- ✓ **Give parents and communities the tools to heal youth who make mistakes.** Rehabilitation starts with the community where it's possible to minimize detention for youth caught up in the criminal justice system, and end placement for youth who are truant, by building a strong network of community-based support services close to their neighborhoods and families.
- ✓ **Deliver quality early developmental support so children and youth have the foundation needed to avoid the school-to-prison pipeline.** Preventing crime means making sure parents have what they need to support children in their earliest stages of development. Receiving early intervention services in a timely manner can allow children with behavioral challenges to receive the supports they need to thrive in school.
- ✓ **Engage teens so they are part of the solution.** All youth are assets to the city and their engagement leads to safer communities. The city must build innovative models that re-engage and support teens, especially those who are disconnected from school







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and other supports. By assembling leaders already working with these youth, and mental professionals using healing-centered, asset-based strategies, the Mayor can lead the design and delivery of innovative models that will offer youth a productive pathway to the future.

-  **Decrease recidivism by prioritizing the educational success of youth involved with the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.** The city and school district must improve the education of youth who are sent away by the child welfare or juvenile justice systems and create real pathways with the emotional and academic supports that ensure a positive re-entry to a traditional public school. Safety nets for young people who have been separated from their families must be stronger, so they succeed in making positive choices as they grow up and enter adulthood.
-  **Invest in youth mental health services to stop cycles of crime and boost the prosperity of our neighborhoods.** Everyone in a community is affected by violence. To address the trauma, distress, and helplessness that leads to further disinvestment, Philadelphia must take the lead to establish expectations of the health insurance and health systems so that guarantee every child receives a mental wellness check-up annually and culturally sensitive treatment when needed.

YEAR ONE STEPS for **Increased Safety**

To make sure the Philadelphia Police are laser-focused on tackling gun violence.

-  **Reinvest at least 50% of the savings from reduced youth incarceration to expand school-based and community-based diversion programs, including intensive prevention services and a complete plan to reinvest the balance in the second year.**
-  **Implement a pilot test of non-detention alternatives such as time-out/cooling off locations to work out conflicts.**
-  **To make sure parents and communities are the strongest source of support for children and youth who make mistakes.**
-  **Direct the Department of Human Services (DHS) to identify and pilot innovative models that help youth and families address the root causes of truancy.**

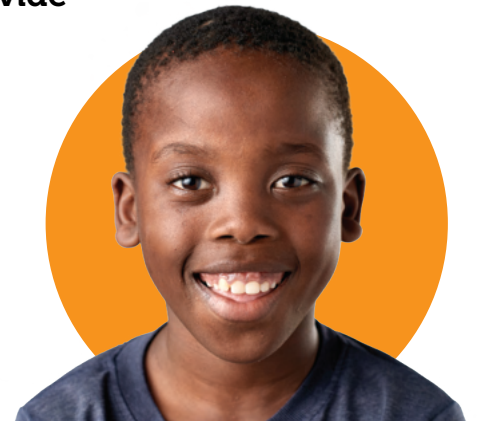
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- ✓ Plan and hold a summit with Juvenile Court that includes judges and probation leadership to review existing alternatives to youth incarceration and addressing truancy and identify ways to expand these options in the community.
- ✓ Increase access to family supports and alternatives to congregate and juvenile placement by addressing the reasons why qualified youth and family services providers will not enter into contracts with the city.
- ✓ End the practice of taking children into the dependency system because the child's parent(s) cannot afford to meet their needs. Instead, continue and expand the use of public funds to meet the urgent financial needs of the family and provide the programs/services that lead to economic stability.
- ✓ Build the consensus among the city, courts, and school district needed to embrace new models that meet the needs of youth who are truant with the goal of ending detention for youth who are truant.
- ✓ To make sure children are supported in their education from the earliest ages to end the school-to-prison pipeline
- ✓ Adopt a 30-day service guarantee for every three- to five-year-old child needing Early Intervention Services.
- ✓ Contract with an external entity to measure parent satisfaction with city administered Early Intervention Services delivery through secret shopper or similar model.
- ✓ Develop a plan for seamless transition from the state administered Early Intervention services to city administered Early Intervention services for the infants and toddlers who continue to need supports.
- ✓ Establish a requirement that every child-serving city agency increase what it is doing to boost third grade literacy and set annual benchmarks for the implementation of what is proposed.
- ✓ To invest in prevention services to ensure the long-term prosperity of our neighborhoods.



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- ✓ Convene the nation's first urban mental health transformation table focused on building a culturally sensitive children/youth and family mental wellness system that heals our kids, is embraced by families, and understood and seen as a resource by the Police, Human Services, and the Board of Education so that children get effective mental wellness services while in school and during after school hours/summer.
- ✓ Support programming that allows special populations at greatest risk of homelessness like expectant parents, foster youth, LGBTQIA people, and youth with immigration challenges to acquire and retain housing.
- ✓ Create a family navigator hotline, outside of DHS, to help families connect to services like youth development, mental health resources, and financial aid so that families can heal, stabilize, and prosper.
- ✓ Develop a Well-Being Fund for focused investments in innovative community solutions to prevent families coming in contact with the child welfare system.
- ✓ Expand the program for recruitment, retention, and support of landlords willing to rent to youth transitioning out of foster care and provide financial support so youth get on their feet.




FOR EDUCATION

- ✎ **Back proven educational reforms that make a world class education for every public school student.** Good teachers and curricula are ingredients for academic excellence. Appointees to the school board and the city must adopt policies that enable public schools to recruit and retain the best teachers.
- ✎ **Connect students to training opportunities for jobs that are available and in-demand in Philadelphia.** Our young people need an education that meets their goals, whatever they may be. College access support must grow and effective partnerships








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with private industry and the trades must expand so students are prepared to accept good jobs upon graduation.

-  **Create a robust year-round landscape of enrichment opportunities.** Extracurricular activities boost student achievement and engagement in schools. Summer jobs prepare students to enter the workforce. It's time for more out-of-school time (OST) programming, which a year-round school model facilitates, so youth are set up for success.

YEAR ONE STEPS for a **Better Education**


To make sure Philadelphia students have state-of-the-art facilities for their education.


-  **Launch Philadelphia's Green Strategy for Schools** where local, state, and federal stakeholders contribute the \$5 billion needed to make Philadelphia schools great places to learn and reduce the carbon footprint of the city.
-  **Ensure that at least \$1 billion of the city's capital resources are available for the Green Strategy for Schools.**
-  **In the event of an economic downturn, commit to find the funds needed to avoid retrenchment on facility improvements.**
-  **Advocate vociferously at the state level for the state to fund school districts equitably and adequately across the Commonwealth.**
-  **To create academic and enrichment opportunities for students and families year-round in and out of school.**
-  **Appoint School Board members who agree to implement policies that open schools early and stay open late (7:30 am to 6:00 pm) and adopt policies that enable external providers to easily augment district-provided enrichment services during the extended hours.**
-  **Increase by 50% the number of youth engaged in OST enrichment and employment programs, after school, and in the summer. Partner with the city, schools, cultural institutions, hospitals, unions, higher education, and youth service agencies to make Philadelphia top in the nation in youth enrichment.**

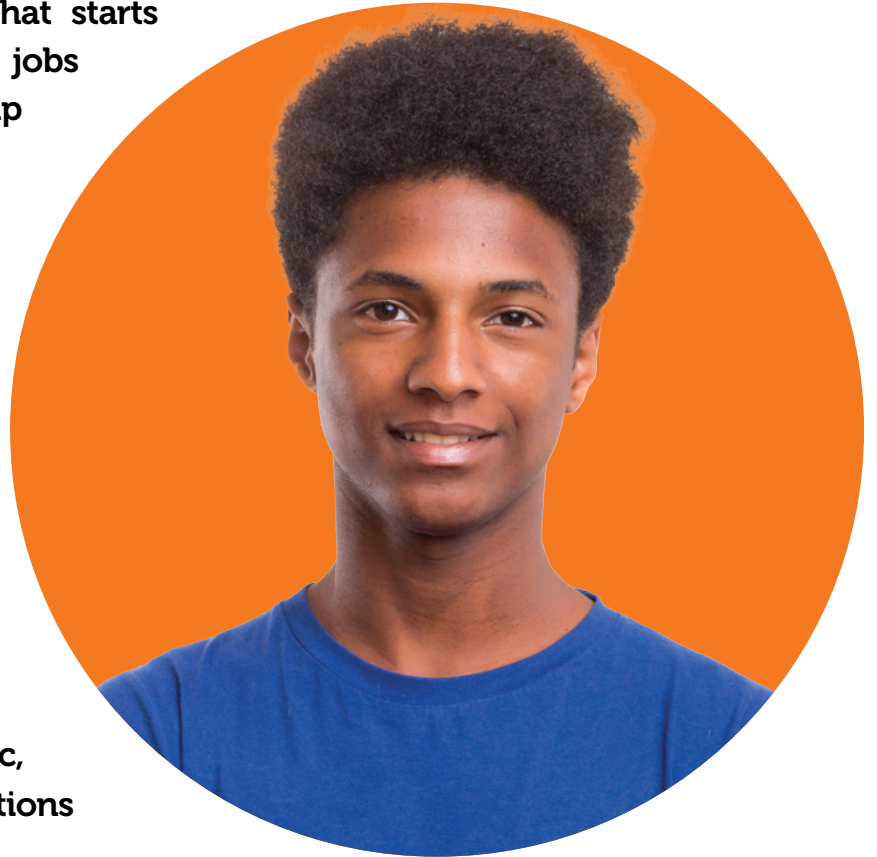


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 Increase the number of recreation center staff that are orchestrating effective youth development programming at centers and playgrounds with youth-focused hours, seven days a week.

 Mount a Youth Prosperity Plan that starts with making 10,000 summer jobs available to youth in partnership with unions, businesses, and corporations who agree to create meaningful summer employment options.

 Designate a high level Youth Rising Team, with a talented leader who reports to the Mayor, charged with standing up a public/private partnership intermediary charged with improving access, equity, and quality out-of-school academic, enrichment and employment options for youth.




 To partner with the School District of Philadelphia to ensure students have a world class education.


 Increase the number of youth enrolled in existing CTE courses by 20%.

 Create a Teachers Love Philadelphia Taskforce, where teachers meet with the Mayor at least twice a year to identify strategies for how the city can show its appreciation for teachers and contribute to district efforts to attract and retain talented educators.

 Use city resources to annually grow the Safe Route program, so that more students and teachers can arrive and leave schools without threats to their physical safety.

 Appoint School Board members that will focus the district leadership to address the working condition issues that are most associated with teacher attrition.

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 **Lead the charge to make sure every school building is safe, clean and inspires learning.** Philadelphia schools must be remediated so that students can learn in clean, green, modern facilities. This requires that local funds leverage state and federal resources to generate enough funds to repair and modernize public schools.

 **Build beautiful green spaces and vibrant recreation centers.**

Research shows everyone benefits from green spaces, and Philadelphia has more than 300 parks. The Department of Parks and Recreation must be a partner with communities and have the resources to maintain these vital community spaces so children and families can safely lead active, healthy lives.




 **Green neighborhoods to fight against climate change.**

Severe weather impacts everyone's health and well-being, but the hardest hit are the neighborhoods with the least. Without air-conditioned homes or spaces and tree cover around them, their neighborhoods turn into heat islands that exacerbate mental and physical health issues. The city must assemble and mobilize public and private stakeholders to plant and nurture the urban tree-cover beginning with neighborhoods with greatest need.







YEAR ONE STEPS to be **Cleaner and Greener**

To ensure children and families have beautiful green spaces with state-of-the-art parks and recreation centers.


 Increase the Parks and Recreation budget to provide adequate staffing and funds for maintenance and programming.

 Direct the Parks and Recreation Commissioner to develop a strategy to attract and retain and attract quality staff who will be dedicated to ensuring that every park and recreation center is a verdant, safe space.

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-  Identify new resources to support another eight years of Rebuild projects so more parks, recreation centers, and libraries contribute to the vibrancy of their neighborhoods.
-  To green our neighborhoods to fight against climate change.
-  Implement the Philly Tree plan to restore the urban forest in neighborhoods most at risk of experiencing severe weather.
-  Designate a high-level leader to develop a neighborhood-focused strategy for heat mitigation, and present that plan with stakeholder support to the Mayor by the end of the first year.
-  Work with City Council to pass legislation that streamlines the process by which communities are able to acquire and retain land for community gardens from the Philadelphia Land Bank.
-  Identify and implement strategies to accelerate the use of electric school and mass transit buses.


FOR ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

-  Lead the effort to provide universal child care so that young children are ready for school and young families can thrive. Parents can work better when they know they have quality child care. In addition to advocating at the state level for more pre-K seats, policies, and resources needed for a stable and growing early childhood education sector, the city must continue to expand PHLpreK and create strategies that engage federal and state partners to solve the extreme shortage of care for infants and toddlers.



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 **Boost resources to end the cycle of poverty for children and families.** Too often, children and families are trapped in poverty and cannot prosper, because they do not have basic resources: housing, child care, healthcare, and healthy foods. Families need more access to BenePhilly Centers and innovative options that can connect them to financial resources, including pop-up neighborhood prosperity fairs. For youth transitioning out of foster care who have less family support, the city must focus on meeting their employment and housing needs so they can become economically self-sufficient.


 **Grow jobs in the caring and learning sectors to boost city prosperity.** PHLpreK created 800 new jobs resulting in \$28 million in labor income and \$50 million in private GDP. The city must continue meeting the educational and care needs of children and back the sector's growth with a real employment strategy so that we can fully capture the economic benefit.

YEAR ONE STEPS for **More Economic Opportunity**


To provide universal child care so that families can work.

 **Expand PHLpreK to serve at least 6,000 children annually.**

 **Adopt a wage policy for PHLpreK that sets the floor at \$17.53 an hour for PHLpreK staff and use relationships in Harrisburg and Washington to attract the funding for this minimum pay rate for all early learning programs.**

 **Continue to operate the Office of Early Learning and direct that office to convene public and private stakeholders to identify concrete ways that the city can stimulate a more robust system of infant and toddler care.**

 **To boost family resources to end the cycle of poverty.**

 **Increase access to expert supports, like BenePhilly, so that families can tap public benefits and other supports for basic needs. Expand the benefits for which families can apply at BenePhilly centers so that centers are also screening for rental assistance, EITC, and WIC.**

 Train city workers in health and human services to increase client referrals to BenePhilly, or another expert entity, that is contracted to give family real time support via phone, chat, or other options.

 Initiate a year-round schedule of pop-up prosperity fairs across Philadelphia neighborhoods, so residents can receive hands-on help for benefits applications.



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Improving the lives of 322,000 children boosts employment and the prosperity of Philadelphia's working population, which in turn, grows Philadelphia's tax base and generates community equity.

This is the plan for a cleaner, safer, greener city full of educational and economic opportunity.

The Kids Campaign Supporters

Acclaim Academy, African Family Health Organization (AFAHO), After School Activities Partnerships, Allen Hilles Fund, BLBB Charitable, Bright Little Scholars, Brightside Academy, Center for Autism, Center for Families and Relationships, Children First, Children's Village of Philadelphia, Children's Playhouse Early Learning Center, Childspace Too, City Year Philadelphia, Civically Engaged, Community Alliance for Development, Community Education Center (CEC), CASA Philadelphia, Cradle of Liberty Council, BSA, Deep Space Mind 215, Defenders Association of Philadelphia, Education Law Center, EleganceXtreme Inc., Episcopal Community Service, Fab Youth Philly, Family Promise of Philadelphia, First Up, Food Moxie, Give and Go Athletics, Grays Ferry Early Learning Academy, Greater Philadelphia YMCA, Health Promotion Council of Pennsylvania / Advocacy Institute, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS) Pennsylvania, HopePHL, The Horner Foundation, Indochinese American Council, Innovageous, Institute for the Development of African American Youth, Inc, Intercommunity Action, Joseph J. Peters Institute, KABOOM!, Latinos Educando Juntos, Learning My Way Montessori, Logan Civic Association, Maternity Care Coalition, Mental Health Partnerships, Mothers in Charge, Inc., Need In Deed, Norris Square Neighborhood Project, North10, Philadelphia, Olympik Tots Early Learning Center, PA Youth Vote, Parent (Action Lab), Parks and Rec Heroes Fund, Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, Philabundance, Philadelphia Association of Community Development Corporations, Philadelphia Community Empowerment Through Soccer / Kensington Soccer Club, Philadelphia Nurse- Family Partnership, Philadelphia Youth Sports Collaborative, Philly Homes 4 Youth Coalition, Primacy Futboller Academy, Project Home, Honickman Learning Center, Public Health Management Corporation (PHMC), Public Interest Law Center, Read by 4th, Read to Succeed - Philadelphia, Reinvestment Fund, Safe-Hub, Settlement Music School/ Kaleidoscope, Shane's Friends II, South Philly Sigma Sharks, SPIN Inc., Sunrise of Philadelphia / Greater Philadelphia Extracurricular Collaborative, Support Center for Child Advocates, Taller Puertorriqueno, Tiffany's Grow and Glow Family Childcare, Turning Points for Children, Vetri Community Partnership, Vietnamese Senior Association, Walls for Justice, We Care Learning and Development Center, Whiz Kidz Developmental & Early Learning Academy & YPAC - Young Professionals Advisory Council of Children First

The Kids Campaign Platform Committee

Bright Little Scholars, Children First, Children's Playhouse Early Learning, Children's Village, Civically Engaged, Education Law Center, Elegance Xtreme, Inc., Episcopal Community Services, Fab Youth Philly, First Up, Greater Philadelphia YMCA, Hope PHL, Indochinese American Council, Latinos Educando Juntos, National Nurse-Led Care Coalition, Need In Deed Parks and Rec Heroes Fund, Philadelphia Youth Sports Collaborative, Project HOME, Public Interest Law Center, Support Center for Child Advocates, and Turning Points for Children

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Organizations supporting Philadelphia youth see firsthand how gun violence, drugs, and poverty have traumatized children and robbed them of safety and security. Now these groups are launching The Kids' Campaign to tell those vying for mayor that there is nothing more important than making every day safer than the day before for children and families.

The Kids' Campaign is the first of its kind in Philadelphia - a nonpartisan effort that is not backing a candidate and that defines the election solely on the safety of children and youth. Through candidate questionnaires and forums, The Kids' Campaign will share with voting parents and young adults the information they need to determine which candidate will keep Philly's children safe.

Learn more at: www.thekidscampaign.org

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Philadelphia's Next Mayor

Must Prioritize Kids' Mental Health

Philadelphia is facing a crisis in children's mental health. In 2019, 40% of Philadelphia students reported feeling sad or hopeless almost every day, and 22% had considered suicide. This mental health crisis is rooted in and directly connected to systemic causes that have only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, such as:

- **The Gun Violence Epidemic:** The gun violence that our city's youth is experiencing is of unprecedented proportions, which suggests a severe impact on our children's mental health as a result. A study conducted by Penn Medicine using 2021 Philadelphia gun violence data found that children living within 4-5 blocks of a shooting have increased odds of a mental health-related pediatric emergency department visit. In this same time period, rates of suicidal ideation and deaths by suicide have increased among high school students. **Children's mental wellness is a violence prevention strategy.**
- **Structural Racism and Inequity:** Exposure to both structural and personally mediated racism and discrimination has been identified as a prominent social driver of mental health, as highlighted in [the American Academy of Pediatrics' policy statement](#). Such exposure has been shown to negatively impact the social-emotional and behavioral development of young children. Yet, the Philadelphia mental health system is primarily run by white leadership that does not understand the experience of racism and its effects on mental health. Philadelphia lacks a behavioral health workforce that is culturally responsive and representative of the vulnerable youth in our city. **Racism has contributed heavily to the mental health crisis our children are experiencing.**

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- **Systemic Poverty and Mental Health:** Childhood poverty is well recognized in research as an indicator of poor mental health outcomes. Of the 350,000 children living in Philadelphia, about 290,000 rely on the services administered and managed by Community Behavioral Health (CBH). This means the city is the service delivery mechanism for 83% of the children in the city. These services are severely underdeveloped to meet the complex needs of our children.

The bottom line is that 138 children have been victims of a shooting in 2023 alone; 16 of these shootings were fatal. Children across the city see this violence and wonder not if, but when it will happen to them. Our children are living in a constant state of stress and fear. Yet, the city's mental health system has not taken a leadership role in the strategy to address gun violence.

In the summer of 2023, several key stakeholders were consulted, including parents of children with mental health challenges; school counselors and nurses; teachers; behavioral health providers; and behavioral health administrators. The stakeholders identified the following three priorities to address the children's mental health crisis in Philadelphia.

1. Increase availability of and access to quality mental health supports in schools
2. Increase access to mental health services for children outside of school.
3. Reform the behavioral health resources and supports for children ages 0-3.

Priority 1: **Increase availability of and access to quality school-based mental health services**

Only 57 of the 217 schools in the Philadelphia school district have access to quality targeted mental health supports (STEP program).

The STEP program has served around 25,000 students annually, representing just 12% of the district's total student population. While intensive mental health supports are available in all schools, utilization of these services remains low.

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1a. Appointing a DBHIDS Commissioner and CEO of CBH who will fully undertake the development of the school-based mental health system, including quality assurance and increased utilization.

1b. Appointing school board members that will follow through on the prioritization of student mental health and wellness.

1c. Make increased access to quality mental health services for kids in schools a top priority for your time as mayor.

1d. Direct CBH and DBH to deepen their effort and expand resources to work with the District to increase the mental health and wellbeing of all youth in Philadelphia by ensuring the availability of services and supports across all three tier of the multi-tiered system of support.

Comprehensive Mental Health System of Supports

Tier One: Universal mental health supports

Proactive mental wellness resources through safe school climate, social emotional learning curriculums, and support from staff trained in Mental Health First Aid and Healing Centered Engagement practices.

Tier Two: Targeted mental health supports

Students who need more support receive targeted, brief interventions from trained school counselors and/or behavioral health professionals. These services can be funded through Medicaid if structured appropriately. The mayor must direct city funds to support these services for youth not covered by Community Behavioral Health.

Tier Three: Intensive mental health supports

Students who need the most intensive level of mental health services are able to access these services easily, without bureaucratic barriers to hinder the process.*

Priority 2: Increase access to mental health services for children outside of school.

Zero training or connection to support.

2a. Direct DBHIDS and CBH take a leadership role in partnership with the city's Out of School Time and Violence Prevention offices to build the capacity and resources for Out of School Time providers and other extracurricular programs so they can support the mental health needs of the children served by programming.

2b. Extend the reach of Tier One/universal supports in schools to promote mental health and wellness into out of school time programs.

2c. Direct DBHIDS/CBH to commit resources to implement Healing Centered Engagement practices across school-based behavioral health providers.

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Priority 3: Reform existing behavioral health resources and support for children ages 0-3.

“Emotional disturbance” comprises less than .1% of the children enrolled in Early Intervention programming in Philadelphia, yet over 20% of suspensions and expulsions are attributed to problematic behaviors. The Early Intervention system is the earliest stage of the school to prison pipeline. Philadelphia’s Early Intervention part C (birth to three years old) should be the best program in the state. Unfortunately, the city is failing to administer effective intervention programs.

3a. The next mayor must develop a turnaround plan to revamp the city’s delivery of these services within six months that boost utilization and quality of services.

3b. Create an Early Childhood Division within DBHIDS/CBH to amplify the priority of early childhood mental health.

Sample elements of an Early Intervention Turnaround Plan are attached in Appendix A.

Conclusion

Addressing the youth mental health crisis in Philadelphia requires strong leadership at every level that can disseminate clear vision and build community buy-in. To accomplish the above priorities, the next mayor must appoint a Commissioner of DBHIDS and a Chief Executive Officer of CBH with the following qualities:

- **Technical qualities**
 - Deep understanding of children’s mental health from a trauma-informed perspective.
 - Public health expertise in systems-level implementation and administration.
 - Understanding of poverty, racism, and violence as adverse childhood experiences and the underpinning of mental illness
 - Takes a prevention approach to mental health that builds community-level and individual resilience.
- **Leadership qualities**
 - Strong advocate for the children of Philadelphia
 - Ability to communicate directly with Philadelphia’s communities

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Appendix A: Sample elements of an Early Intervention Turnaround Plan

- 1. The city's program must ensure there is seamless transition between the state-run Early Intervention Part B program (3-5 year olds).**

- 2. Develop outcomes that will measure process improvement, program quality, and child-centered outcomes of the revamped Early Intervention system.**
 - a. Every child is guaranteed screening within X days**
 - b. Every child is guaranteed service within X days after screening**
 - c. Track utilization over time to measure whether families persist with the service as an indicator of quality of the service**

- 3. Upon the execution of the Early Intervention Turnaround Plan, the mayor can take the following actions to improve the system:**
 - a. Builds service coordination and referral pathways across Community Behavioral Health and Early Intervention agencies, establishing seamless access to qualified services**
 - b. Increase the number of families served by clinical interventions among children birth to five years old.**
 - c. Develop and promote centralized local resource library to include essential information on functions of agencies within Early Intervention and Behavioral Health to include common sample forms, explanations of use, direct contact information, and endorsed technical assistance and training resources.**
 - d. Embed collaboration tools in Early Intervention Service Provider protocols to promote consultative early intervention service model in early learning settings.**
 - e. Establish a mechanism for regular, reciprocal feedback between early learning programs and Early Intervention and Behavioral Health agencies.**

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Supporting Writers

Organizations contributing to the writing of this memo: The Alliance for Community Service Providers Center for Families and Relationships, Community Behavioral Health, CORA Services, Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbility Services, Gemma Services, Jefferson Hospital, JEVS, Northeast Treatment Centers, Public Health Management Corporation, Scattergood Foundation and SPIN, Inc.

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About The Kids Campaign

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Philadelphia's Next Mayor

Must Invest in Families and Youth To Keep Us Safe

Over the past five years, Philadelphia has made great strides in reducing child welfare and juvenile justice system involvement, reducing both the number of youth in foster care and the number of youth in juvenile placements by approximately half.

The City is poised to build on these successes and strengthen the social safety net to prevent system involvement so that child welfare and juvenile justice resources can be directed to the children and families with the greatest need and at the highest level of risk.

The City can ensure that children and families have equitable access to housing, physical and behavioral health care, education, employment, and recreation to support healthy development and prevent involvement in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

These services should be made available to all Philadelphia children and their families, without the requirement of an open Department of Human Services (DHS) or probation case and ensuring that those entities are involved with families only when necessary to ensure safety.

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Policy Priorities

Priority 1: **Prevention**

Priority 1a: Restore and improve city investments in prevention services, so that youth and families have what they need without the involvement of child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

Priority 2a: Improve child welfare and juvenile justice outcomes through community engagement.

Priority 2: **Child Welfare**

Priority 2a: Establish a policy that families will not be separated for economic reasons.

Priority 2b: Keep families together with adequate integrated support services.

Priority 2c: Shorten the time children spend in out-of-home care and avoid repeated placements.

Priority 3: **Juvenile Justice**

Priority 3a: Divert more young people from involvement in the juvenile justice system and implement an array of alternatives to incarceration for those who do become system involved.

Priority 3b: Increase school safety and reduce school-based arrests through expanded programming.

Priority 3c: Mobilize public agencies to use data for policy improvements and public accountability.

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Priority 1: **Prevention**

Philadelphia has implemented several initiatives to provide children, youth, and their families with resources to prevent child welfare and juvenile justice system involvement. From DHS discretionary funds to address families' concrete needs, to Out of School Time (OST) and youth employment, the City has a number of strengths on which to build in order to increase prevention opportunities.

Despite increased investments elsewhere in the city, DHS' investments in prevention services have contracted over time, from approximately \$96 million in FY2006 to an estimated \$75 millionⁱ in the FY2024 proposed budget. Not accounting for inflation, this still reflects a staggering \$21 million decrease in prevention investments.

Additionally, the City has struggled to recruit and retain qualified providers that comprise a full continuum of human services. The once-largest provider of Community Umbrella Agency (CUA) services opted not to pursue continued contracts for the service, citing cost of liability insurance and other concerns. Recent Requests for Proposals (RFPs) for tiered juvenile justice services and CUAs received limited responses, resulting in both having to be reissued. Anecdotally, large providers report challenges with timely payment and a lengthy contracting process, while smaller community-based providers note that the process is complicated and overly burdensome.

Efforts to expand programs, including prevention, should include a review of the existing contracting process and changes that attract and retain the highest quality providers and programs in Philadelphia.

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The following recommendations support a robust system of prevention, one that includes seamless navigation and access to services, promotes innovation, and prioritizes community engagement as the keys to keeping families safely together.

Priority 1a: Restore and improve city investments in prevention services, so that youth and families have what they need without the involvement of child welfare and juvenile justice systems.

- Philadelphia should structure city services so that children and families have equitable access to housing, health care, education, employment, and recreation to support healthy development and prevent involvement in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. Policy recommendations related to this item are detailed in this Kids Campaign document.
- City agencies and services should be integrated at the child and family level and held to citywide child and family level expectations.
 - Establish a fully developed health and human services system, including economic support and mental health and substance abuse services, through which services are accessible to young people and their families without DHS or Probation involvement.
 - Create a child and family service center line, outside of DHS, to help families navigate and connect to a variety of services, including youth development services, prevention services and behavioral health.
 - Develop a Well-Being Fund for focused investments in innovative community solutions, without ties to DHS, that strengthen families and prevent child welfare system involvement.

This fund should be expertly managed, enabling community-based organizations to provide services that increase the safety and agency of families and communities.

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- Conduct a comprehensive review of the City contracting process to determine recruitment and retention barriers for qualified child welfare and juvenile justice providers.

Priority 1b: Improve child welfare and juvenile justice outcomes through community engagement.

- Direct the DHS Commissioner to develop an authentic youth and parent engagement strategy, in which people with lived experience are valued partners who are compensated for their time and expertise. This strategy may include, for example, the establishment of youth and parent advisory councils, inclusion of youth and families on the Child Welfare Oversight Board, and individuals with lived experience as co-designers of programs.
- Continue DHS' work with mandated reporters to encourage a culture of supporting families.

Priority 2: Child Welfare

Just a few years ago, Philadelphia had the highest rate of placement in foster care of all major cities in the US, quadruple the rate of Chicago and three times the rate of New York City.ⁱⁱ In recent years, Philadelphia has made major progress in acknowledging the impact of historical policy (e.g., redlining, segregation, and oversurveillance by police and child welfare) on families and has made significant effort toward reducing harmful outcomes.

In FY22, Philadelphia's entry rate into out of home care was 3.9 per 1,000 children, reflecting a substantial decline from the FY17 rate of 8.8, yet still higher than the national average of 2.9 per 1,000 children.ⁱⁱⁱ

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Recent data also showed that 66% of DHS-involved children were Black, while Black children only make up 42% of the city's population, reflecting significant racial disproportionality. By comparison, 12% of children involved with DHS were white, though white children make up 35% of the population.^{iv} DHS data also highlighted disproportionality in hotline reports, noting that non-Hispanic Black residents made up the populations of neighborhoods with the highest reporting rates, and that mostly non-Hispanic white residents lived in the neighborhoods with the lowest rate of reports.^v

In 2022, the top five reasons Philadelphia children were removed from their homes included parental drug abuse; neglect; caretaker inability to cope; child's behavior problem; and inadequate housing.^{vi} Existing publicly available data tells us little about family needs and the specific reasons children are removed from their families. Factors associated with poverty (e.g., insufficient food) are likely assumed under neglect but this cannot be distinguished using current categorization.

This information signals to us that while the progress made thus far is commendable, the work is not yet complete. Philadelphia can build on its successes and become a national leader in keeping children safe and healthy, while also keeping families together. The following recommendations will help us get there.

Priority 2a: Establish a policy that families will not be separated for economic reasons.

- Affirmatively continue DHS' efforts to provide monetary/tangible support to families to prevent placement.
- Explore the expanded use of Direct Cash Transfers, e.g., the Philly Joy Bank, to families in communities with high numbers of hotline calls.

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- Revise data collection, analysis, and public reporting of warm line and DHS data to include factors associated with poverty (e.g., food and housing instability) to support directing resources to the areas of greatest need and monitor progress in ending family separation related to poverty.

Priority 2b: Keep families together with adequate integrated support services.

- Expand the “warm line” (Philly Families CAN) to connect families to support and resources outside of DHS.
- Expand [pre-petition legal representation](#), so that more parents can be represented during a child abuse or neglect investigation, rather than after the investigation is complete and a petition for custody has been filed.
- Expand mother-baby placements and rooming-in for substance exposed infants and provide clear guidelines for referral and access.
- Utilize DHS funds to support expansion of home visiting (e.g., [Nurse-Family Partnership](#), [Healthy Families America](#), [Parents as Teachers](#)), to families not currently able to access programs.
- Direct DHS to coordinate with SDP on a truancy response that addresses the individual needs of students and families by improving DHS and CUA assessments of the reasons for truancy, expanding access to services at the school level, training DHS and CUA staff on effective interventions, and developing truancy prevention programs in schools.
- Establish a joint DHS, SDP, and Court policy that children will not be placed in out-of-home care, including residential placements, for truancy alone.
- Increase access to drop-in centers as a “cooling off” option for youth and families in crisis.
- Continue DHS’ work to develop and begin implementation of a plan to end the use of the Philadelphia DHS Child Care Room.

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Priority 2c: Shorten the time children spend in out-of-home care and avoid repeated placements.

In addition to preventing entry into foster care, Philadelphia can become a leader in improving outcomes for youth who do enter out-of-home placement.

Just over half (50.4%) of Philadelphia children reunify with their parents, a reduction over the past five years from 55.1%.^{vii} There has also been an increase in the number of children exiting to non-permanent arrangements (e.g., emancipation, runaway) from approximately 20% in 2017 to 23.7% in 2021.^{viii}

Philadelphia children who left foster care in 2021 spent an average of 23 months in care, which is below the state average of 33.2 months^{ix} but slightly higher than the national average of 21.7 months.^x While some families require additional time to work toward reunification, the system must ensure that youth in care do not remain in care for longer than necessary.

The following recommendations support children and families along the continuum of child welfare services – from timely family reunification to safe, supportive and supported kinship and resource homes, to further reduction in the use of residential treatment, and ensuring the success of youth transitioning to adulthood.

- Expand high quality family time (e.g., [Dauphin County Visit House](#) and [New York Visit Hosts](#)).
- Establish a citywide appropriately funded, consistent resource parent recruitment campaign, with a focus on a pool of resource parents that affirm and support the diverse identities (including religious, cultural, gender and sexuality) and needs of youth in care.
- Expand programs that support transition-age youth, e.g., [LifeSet](#), [Host Homes](#), [Rapid Rehousing](#), [Supervised Independent Living](#).

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- Continue the progress that DHS has made in decreasing use of congregate care so that institutional placements are short-term and utilized only as needed. Such a shift in the use of congregate care must also be coupled with a priority to enhance community-based and homelike settings (including support for parents, kin, and resource caregivers and their providers) so that youth's complex needs are able to be met in lower levels of care.
- Revise residential treatment provider contracts to include a provision that requires children in placement to have access to their local public schools.
- Direct DHS to review and revise procedures and policies to support school stability for students in foster care, including how and when Best Interest Determinations (BID) conferences are initiated, who participates in these meetings, and how the meetings are conducted.
Currently, many BID conferences do not include the Educational Decision Maker ("EDM") for the child, are significantly delayed, and are not based on full information, including current education records.
- With commensurate resources and authority, expand the Office of the Youth Ombudsperson to promote the safety and protect the rights of young people receiving child welfare, juvenile justice, and behavioral health services.
- Along with a commitment from the city and DHS to continue decreasing the number of families involved with child welfare services, build a human services talent pipeline beginning in high school/college so that the full Philadelphia child welfare system can benefit from a greater pool of committed workers.
- Adopt outcomes that measure physical, emotional, educational, and economic well-being for children and families involved with the child welfare system, including prevention and diversion services.
Utilize data on these measures to allocate resources, drive system decision-making, and evaluate performance.

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- Align DHS expenditures and redirect funds to ensure CUAs maintain appropriate staffing ratios and that children and families have access to necessary support services.
- Immediately end the practice of the city taking Social Security benefits from youth in DHS' care.
- Explore the expanded use of Direct Cash Transfers/Guaranteed Income pilot projects, e.g., the Philly Joy Bank, to youth aging out of the foster care system.
- Expand the program for recruitment, retention, and support of landlords willing to rent to youth transitioning out of foster care and provide financial support so youth get on their feet.

Priority 3: **Juvenile Justice**

Priority 3a: Divert more young people from involvement in the juvenile justice system and implement an array of alternatives to incarceration for those who do become system involved.

Over the past five years, the number of Philadelphia youth involved with the juvenile justice system and the city's spending on juvenile justice has decreased. From FY2017-2021, total expenditures declined by 26%, and the number of youth served decreased by 46%.^{xi} With increased reliance on state-run facilities and longer lengths of stay in secure facilities, per-youth spending increased by over a third during that same period. DHS has averaged \$17 million in unspent funds annually over eight years, yet it does not appear the city has reinvested those funds in diversion or alternatives to incarceration.^{xii} Diversion programs tend to have lower recidivism rates than incarceration, but diversion only represented 0.6% of DHS' juvenile justice spending in FY2022.

It is worth noting that between 2021 and 2022, the number of youth involved with the juvenile justice system increased by over 40% statewide, with Philadelphia youth comprising over 10% of the state's total delinquency allegations,^{xiii} despite the overall decline in numbers over a longer period.

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In addition, the number of Philadelphia youth sent to delinquency placements has begun to increase, from 205 in 2021 to 226 in 2022. ^{xiv}

The time for the City to reverse this trend is long overdue. Research tells us that youth incarceration starts the path to recidivism, and that diversion and community-based programs are more effective in preventing future arrest. We can promote community safety and the well-being of our kids by investing in juvenile justice solutions that work, prioritizing programs that support healing, learning, and accountability while keeping young people in their homes and communities.

The following recommendations focus on opportunities to divert more Philadelphia youth from the legal system, increase available and high quality alternatives to incarceration, and reduce recidivism rates.

- **Expand investments in community-based diversion programs, including intensive prevention services.**
 - **Connect youth with diversion services that are appropriate to their individual need and level of risk, and ensure that youth who do not need intervention are not referred for services.**
 - **As data shows that intrafamily conflict is a driver of juvenile justice system involvement, particularly for girls,^{xv} pilot a mediation program that responds when police are called for family disputes.**

- **Develop a full spectrum of post-adjudication support services, including family support, and ensure youth receive the intervention that is appropriate to their need and risk level.**
 - **Provide supervision in the least restrictive form possible to maintain youth and community safety.**

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- The number of youth monitored by Philadelphia juvenile probation using electronic monitoring (GPS) as an alternative to detention has increased steadily over the past five years. While GPS can be an effective tool to maintain safety and prevent detention, it is not the only alternative to detention, nor is it essential for all youth coming into contact with the juvenile justice system. The City must work to substantially reduce the number of youth on electronic monitoring, utilizing it only when necessary for safety.
- Raise awareness among judges and Probation of existing non-placement treatment options (see [brief from the Sentencing Project](#)) in Philadelphia and continue to expand these options in the community.
- Pilot non-detention alternatives, like Utah's Receiving Center or Portland's therapeutic foster care program.
- Expand restorative justice funding to permit more youth to be served by these programs.
- Standardize contract expectations across city programs to include provisions around not restricting admission of youth with firearm-related charges.
- Connect youth transitioning back to the community from incarceration to mentorship, education, employment, legal aid, housing, and other resources shown to decrease recidivism.
- Direct DHS to coordinate with SDP to ensure that returning students are placed in a regular school environment and are not relegated to an inferior alternative school as a secondary punishment.
- Continue DHS' use of discretionary funds to provide financial support to youth transitioning back to the community following incarceration.

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Focus Area: Philadelphia Juvenile Justice Services Center

The Philadelphia Juvenile Justice Services Center (PJJSC) has been understaffed and over its designated capacity for months, yet judges continue to send and keep children there. Children are sleeping on mattresses on the floor, some in spaces not designed for sleeping, educational programs are suspended, and there is limited availability of physical and mental health care or recreation. These conditions are untenable and do not promote the rehabilitation and well-being of the youth placed there, or the safety of any individual in the facility, including staff. While some rhetoric suggests that the youth at PJJSC pre-adjudication are there due to alleged violent offenses, there is no publicly accessible data regarding charges or safety concerns posed by youth there, and there are anecdotal reports of youth being held on minor charges and/or technical violations of probation.

The following recommendations address the crisis at PJJSC through a focus on reducing the census while also improving conditions for youth detained there.

- Appoint a staff member within the mayor's office to focus on improving conditions at PJJSC, including but not limited to the physical facility, staffing, safety of residents, availability and quality of physical and behavioral health services, and availability and quality of education services.
- Direct DHS to work with SDP on a plan to provide consistent, quality education that meets or exceeds legal mandates regardless of staffing or census levels at PJJSC.
- Convene a weekly meeting between the mayor's office and the First Judicial District to review youth sent to PJJSC, their charges, their assessed risk levels, and any aggravating or mitigating factors used to override their risk assessment.
- For youth who are sent to detention, the City should explore partnership with all other facilities in the southeastern region licensed to provide detention to pre-adjudication youth.

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- Direct DHS to publicly share de-identified data about youth held at PJJSC, including charges and assessed risk level.
 - Track and publish the rate of overrides of the PaDRAI, including overrides to release and overrides to hold.

Priority 3b: Increase school safety and reduce school-based arrests through expanded programming.

Prior to the implementation of the Philadelphia Police School Diversion Program, SDP documented 1,580 school-based arrests in the 2013-14 school year. Five years after the program's implementation, the number had decreased by 84%, counting 251 total arrests in SY 2018-19. In addition to the reduction of initial arrest, school-based diversion shows promise for preventing future involvement with the legal system. Consistent with broader research on diversion outcomes, Philadelphia youth in the diversion program were less likely than those who were arrested to be re-arrested following the original school-based incident.^{xvi}

- Building on the success of the Philadelphia Police School Diversion Program, the City should reinvest cost savings from reduced incarceration costs to expand school-based diversion programs.
- The Philadelphia Police Department (PPD) should work with SDP to reframe eligibility language to describe behaviors, not charges, and to provide more discretion in referrals to those who have relationships with youth (e.g., teachers and school administrators).
 - Currently, alleged offenses eligible for the program include "possession of weapons on school property, other than a firearm, shotgun, or rifle; criminal trespass; disorderly conduct, including both summary and misdemeanor; knowing and intentional possession of a controlled substance or counterfeit substances; and obstruction of highways or other passageways."^{xvii} However, these describe charges, not behaviors.

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The District Attorney's Office is responsible for charging, and they are not yet involved with youth at the time a school-based diversion decision is made.

- The Philadelphia Police Department should also work with SDP to revise the Memorandum of Understanding between PPD and SDP to align with state school-based diversion legislation and to include behaviors for which police must not be called.

Priority 3c: Mobilize public agencies to use data for policy improvements and public accountability.

Beyond basic information, the public has very little access to data regarding youth served by the juvenile justice system, including those in detention and placement. In addition, stakeholders representing and supporting youth involved with the juvenile justice system report challenges in elevating concerns about the care and services youth are receiving, as there is no current feedback mechanism to reach the Administration directly.

The following recommendations promote information sharing, collaboration, and transparency among system partners to ensure the best outcomes for young people.

- Ensure data transparency related to Philadelphia youth involved in the juvenile justice system, including deidentified data specific to charges and lengths of stay in detention and secure treatment.
- Transparently track and report which youth receive which services/case outcomes, to ensure youth are being matched to an appropriate level of supervision.
- In partnership with SDP, track and report on school stability of students in foster care and in the juvenile justice system.

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- Create a robust accountability and oversight structure, which includes the Office of the Youth Ombudsperson and the Mayor's office, for PJJSC and other facilities providing community-based services, as well as secure detention and placement services to Philadelphia system-involved youth.
- Appoint a liaison within the mayor's office who will regularly convene juvenile justice stakeholders to raise emergent issues with the Administration in real time.
- Convene a summit that includes the First Judicial District, District Attorney's Office, Defenders Association, and Juvenile Probation leadership to review existing alternatives to youth incarceration and identify ways to expand these options in the community.

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Appendix A: Stakeholder Participation

The following individuals and organizations participated in the development of these recommendations through a series of in-person and virtual meetings between May and September 2023. These stakeholders contributed their expertise and experience to this effort and may support some, but not all recommendations in the document. Stakeholders who endorse all of the recommendations are indicated by an asterisk.

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About The Kids Campaign

The Kids' Campaign is the first of its kind in Philadelphia – a nonpartisan effort that is not backing a candidate for Mayor and that defines the election solely on the safety of children and youth. Through candidate questionnaires and forums, The Kids' Campaign will share with voting parents and young adults the information they need to determine which candidate will keep Philly's children safe. Learn more about The Kids Campaign at www.thekidscampaign.org.

Endnotes

ⁱ Estimate derived from line items under "Prevention" (\$62M) in the Human Services section and the Office of Children and Families item (\$13M) under the Managing Director's Office in the city Operating Budget.

ⁱⁱ Ao, Bethany. "Philadelphia Has the Highest Rate of Family Separation, and Kids in Foster Care Need Mental Health Support." <https://www.inquirer.com>, October 16, 2020. <https://www.inquirer.com/health/philadelphia-foster-care-mental-health-20201016.html>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid

^{iv} Quarterly Indicators Report - City of Philadelphia. Accessed September 27, 2023. https://www.phila.gov/media/20230814115210/Quarterly-Indicators-Report-FY23_Q3_8.11.23_Full.pdf.

^v Ibid

^{vi} "Report: 2022 State of Child Welfare - September 2022." PA Partnerships For Children, September 27, 2022. <https://www.papartnerships.org/report/report-2022-state-of-child-welfare-september-2022/>.

^{vii} Ibid

^{viii} Ibid

^{ix} Ibid

^x U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children's Bureau. The AFCARS Report #29 . Accessed September 27, 2023. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/cb/afcars-report-29.pdf>.

^{xi} EConsult Solutions, Inc., and Independent Variable, LLC. Philadelphia's shifting juvenile justice paradigm: An economic analysis. Accessed September 27, 2023. https://phillyda.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Philadelphias-Shifting-Juvenile-Justice-Paradigm_Technical-Report.pdf

^{xii} Ibid

^{xiii} Pennsylvania Juvenile Court Judges Commission. 2022 Juvenile Court Annual Report. Accessed September 27, 2023. <https://www.jcjc.pa.gov/Research-Statistics/Disposition%20Reports/2022%20Juvenile%20Court%20Annual%20Report.pdf>.

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^{xv} Philadelphia District Attorney's Office, and Independent Variable, LLC. Overlooked Or Overscrutinized? A Case Study of Girls' Justice in Philadelphia and Implications for the Design of a Fairer System. Accessed September 27, 2023. <https://phillyda.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Overlooked-or-Overscrutinized.pdf>.

^{xvi} "Philadelphia Police School Diversion Program." JJR&P Lab. Accessed September 27, 2023.

<https://www.jjrnlab.com/diversion-program.html>.

^{xvii} Philadelphia Police Department. Philadelphia Police Department Directive 3.25. Accessed September 27, 2023.

<https://www.phillypolice.com/assets/directives/D3.25-PoliceSchoolDiversionProgram.pdf>.

Expanding Out-of-School Time Opportunities for Philly Kids:

Recommendations for the 100th Mayor

Philadelphia has an incredible resource that any city administration has yet to fully tap for the city’s 322,000 children. In neighborhoods, schools, recreation centers, and libraries across the city, hundreds of caring adults support the learning and development of children and youth in afterschool and summer programs – out-of-school time (OST) programs, for short – that young people love and parents trust.

Extensive research shows that engagement in OST programs yields significant benefits. Children and youth perform better in school, gain valuable work experiences, develop socioemotional skills, and are more likely to complete high school. Parents feel good at their jobs because they know their children are safe and supported while they are at work. In other words, OST programming is a way to improve educational outcomes, create economic opportunity, and makes neighborhoods safe.

Yet, only 25,330 kids participate in afterschool, summer programs, or youth employment tied to the City. That is less than 10% of Philadelphia’s kids!

City Entity	Number of children and youth served	Location of services
Office of Children and Families (OCF)	6,100	13 priority zip codes, community schools, and 10 additional schools selected by the District
Parks and Recreation	6,000 in the summer, 2,000 in afterschool activities	
School District	3,230	60 schools
Free Library of Philadelphia		
Work Ready	8,000	

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Children and families want more OST activities, and there are many more OST providers ready to meet the demand. With strategic investments, an eye towards city-wide coordination, and strong leadership, the next mayor can grow the number of children, youth, and families served, make better use of existing resources, and spearhead groundbreaking programs that prepare children and youth for exciting futures.

Learning from the best: Los Angeles and Boston

Los Angeles and Boston are national models for how cities can leverage OST programs to address deep-seeded inequity. Students in Los Angeles OST program are less likely to commit juvenile crime and more likely to finish school. They also become mentors and community leaders, often returning to work in the same OST program that nurtured them.ⁱ

Boston's OST programs have closed the academic achievement gap between wealthy and high-needs neighborhoods. Their students participate in a nationally-recognized summer program that affords students opportunities to continue learning and engage local universities, cultural institutions, and businesses – all while having fun.ⁱⁱ

Behind these accomplishments are strong OST intermediaries, entities with strong government backing tasked with building a vibrant sector that coheres around common frameworks, best practices, and a desire for large-scale planning. Intermediaries

- Convene leadership in government, business, philanthropy, and the provider community with the purpose of improving the quality of programs and expanding access to families,
- Leverage separate funding stream to support programs that meet shared city-wide goals,
- Ensure disparate stakeholders are lock-step in the implementation of programs,
- Unify metrics for need and success
- Train OST providers in cutting-edge practices to deliver the best possible programming.

For the last 15 years, national experts point to intermediaries as a key ingredient for vibrant OST systems.ⁱⁱⁱ

LA's Best: how OST intermediaries improve sector quality

With the mission to “provide a safe and supervised afterschool education, enrichment, and recreation program for children ages 5 to 12 in Los Angeles,” LA's Best offers free academic year and summer programming to 25,000 students in 200 schools where neighborhoods have the fewest supports and greatest need. Throughout the school year, LA's Best students have nutritious meals, homework help, and the chance to participate in a wide array of enrichment activities whether that be in STEM, literacy, the arts, sports, or health and wellness. LA's Best

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summer programs mirror the academic year to complement learning. Operating out of elementary schools, Monday to Friday, to 6 pm, for 7 weeks out of the summer, LA's Best uses activities and field trips promoting experiential learning to enhance academic achievement.^{iv}

To ensure that all LA's Best sites are prepared to deliver quality services, the intermediary provides professional development to staff so that they can better address issues affecting students across the board. Staff regularly participate in trainings on topics that not only improve program management but align with LA's Best values for cultivating student self-esteem and self-leadership. Staff also have access to online resource hubs where they share innovative activities and insights.

Because of its emphasis on professional development, LA's Best can recruit from the communities they serve. Two thousand-plus LA Best's staff draw from the programs' surrounding communities and 25% of them are LA Best's alumni. Their professional development infrastructure helped staff meet student needs. Seeing how the pandemic affected their students in unforeseen ways, LA's Best trained all staff on trauma-informed care and helped staff incorporate socio-emotional learning in their activities.^v

Boston Beyond: how OST intermediaries can boost academic performance through partnerships in Government and the School District

Founded in 2005, the OST intermediary Boston Beyond has served as the hub for the city's OST ecosystem. Working closely with the Mayor's Office and the school district, Boston Beyond aimed to create a broader safety net that complemented regular school to close the academic achievement gap between students in wealthy and poor neighborhoods. Realizing that each stakeholder in the OST ecosystem had limited reach, the intermediary convened government and school leaders, businesses, philanthropy, and providers around common goals, clear roles, and a timeline that allowed for seamless execution of programs. To date, Boston Beyond has leveraged over 300 programs and schools in their network to bring afterschool and summer learning opportunities to over 20,000 students across grade levels and neighborhoods every year. They have also established standard metrics that not only guide provider work but measure collective impact.

Boston Beyond's "fifth quarter program," Summer Learning for All, is especially notable. In 2010, Boston Beyond and the Boston School District launched an effort to turn the city into a classroom that reinforced key skills identified by college admissions and human resource professionals. The center of gravity charged with building the OST system citywide, the intermediary deployed partner strengths at every level of the vision's execution. Boston Beyond gathered input from the city and school administration on need, leveraged philanthropic partnerships for funding, coordinated providers, and helped programs gain access to invaluable hands-on learning opportunities from universities, museums, and employers. Boston Beyond also introduced a partner portal to collect common data points like student profiles, participation

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rates, and staff and student surveys. In ten years, Summer Learning for All grew to serve more than 15,000 students in 160 programs and has expanded to expressly address the needs of special needs students.^{vi} Summer Learning for All now replaces traditional summer school for the city and is lauded by the National Summer Learning Association as a national model.

Build Philadelphia’s Public-Private Partnership to Expand Youth Opportunity

The pieces to create a coherent OST system that ensures more access for children and youth are there, but the coordination with a common agenda is not. Because Philadelphia wants to engage kids, no less than four city agencies administer extracurricular programming for children and youth:

- Office of Children and Families (OCF)
- Parks and Recreation
- Free Library of Philadelphia
- School District of Philadelphia (multiple offices)
- Work Ready via Work Ready intermediary

To increase access and to improve the quality and coordination of extracurricular programming, the mayor must:

Stimulate public and private partnerships to support the expansion of OST opportunities for children and youth

Currently, the City’s Office of Children and Families allocates prevention dollars to fund OST seats. To some extent, the source of funds limits the types of programs the administration can offer and fundamentally those funds are far too limited to meet the need. To grow the number and type of free programs for children and youth, the mayor must direct the maximum amount of prevention funds for this purpose and augment those funds with general fund dollars increase the number of available options for youth.

In addition to money for additional programming, the mayor must encourage a public and private partnership in the form of an OST intermediary to organize and grow the OST sector. For comparison, the investment in LA’s Best is a total of \$6.4M, of which \$3.9M provides capacity building services, training, and support for the OST community and about \$2.5M covers administrative operating costs. These funds are drawn from federal, state, city, and private funds.

Leverage city and school facilities for afterschool, evening, and summer programming

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A sound way to increase OST access for children and families is to make sure the city’s youth-friendly spaces – recreation centers, libraries, and schools – offer ample programming. Schools, in particular, can be open from 7:30 am to 6:00 pm as well as during breaks. If open and made available for OST providers to run programming, children, youth, and families can access more opportunities for enrichment, whether that is a club, sport, or simple evening hangout spot.

Designate GPEC as the intermediary charged with facilitating the public-private partnership efforts to improve access, equity, and the quality of out-of-school academic, enrichment, and employment opportunities for youth.

Close collaboration between the City, School District, and OST providers is key to the successful rollout of extended school hours and year-round school. In other cities that have attempted similar initiatives, an OST intermediary has facilitated the communication and execution of all stakeholders needed to implement plans.

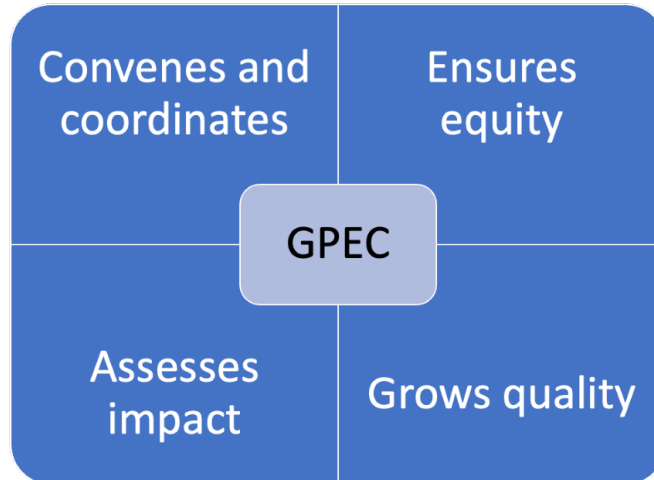
Philadelphia can do the same, if not more

Philadelphia needs a more coordinated OST sector so that every family has access to quality afterschool and summer programming and every teen has the opportunity to gain summer work experience.

An intermediary that takes on system-building efforts can expand the sector’s reach, and the **Greater Philadelphia Extracurricular Collaborative (GPEC)** is uniquely positioned to build the intermediary.

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Convenes provider community and works with Office of Children and Families, School District, Parks and Recreation, Free Library to ensure smooth deployment of OST programs year-round.



Works with city, PHMC, philanthropy, and providers to develop funding opportunities that direct resources to neighborhoods with highest need.

Develop standard metrics that help the city and providers measure impact and determine future planning.

Provides professional development for OST providers across sector to facilitate effectiveness and engagement with families and children.

GPEC is a network of OST providers and supportive funders aimed at building a robust OST sector in Philadelphia and its surrounding regions. Founded at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, GPEC convened OST providers as municipal and program needs pivoted quickly to share information and best practices. Since then, GPEC has continued to convene OST providers around common needs at the School District and City level. It has also organized events that can build provider capacity like Funder Meet and Greets.

Although funding stream tends to determine the networks and resources an OST provider can access, GPEC works with all providers regardless of their funding and areas of specialty. GPEC therefore understands the perspectives that can help the city and school district build an OST system that engages all stakeholders.

As a permanent entity, the intermediary can reverse the on-and-off nature of the city's past system-building efforts to provide stability so that relationships grow, timelines and stakeholder meetings are consistent, and long-term projects take root, grow, and continue, long after any one mayoral term.

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Prospective board of directors for OST intermediary	
City	OST <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabinet-level education officer overseeing OST • Parks and Recreation, Commissioner • Free Library of Philadelphia, Executive Director • Office of Violence Prevention, Director Youth employment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Department of Commerce, Director
School District	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Superintendent • Office of Student Life
Operational partners	OST: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PHMC Youth employment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Philadelphia Works • Work Ready intermediary • Business and corporate partners like Wells Fargo, Citizens Bank, and Aramark.

Other stakeholders to consult

- PHMC
- Philadelphia Youth Network (PYN)
- JEVS

Conclusion

We need to boost supports if Philadelphia wants families in every neighborhood to become self-sufficient. Parents need to know that their kids are cared for and safe beyond school hours so that they can work. Students need to be engaged in activities they love outside of school so that their academic, socioemotional, and job skills are reinforced.

The next mayor can expand OST activities for children and families to meet the needs of children, youth, and families. Extending school hours and year-round school will increase access. Funding OST programs with city dollars will too. But, to make sure city resources are effectively utilized and schools have the quality programming they need for extended hours, the next mayor should establish an OST intermediary that builds the OST sector. As the only entity

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in Philadelphia working with all providers across funding streams, GPEC is uniquely positioned to carry out the intermediary's functions. Only then can plans for expanded access be effectively executed with ample stakeholder buy-in and quality assured.

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The following groups contributed to the writing of the memo: After School Activities Partnership, Greater Philadelphia Philanthropy Network, Greater Philadelphia YMCA, Norris Square Neighborhood Project, North 10, Play On Philly, Philadelphia Youth Sports Collaborative, and Sunrise of Philadelphia.

i "Impact," LA's Best, 2023, <https://lasbest.org/our-purpose/impact/>.

ii "Big Mission = Big Impact," Boston After School and Beyond, 2023, <https://bostonbeyond.org/about/impact/>.

iii Collaborative for Building After-School Systems, "Making the Connections: A Report on the First National Survey of Out-of-School Time Intermediary Organizations," Wallace Foundation, May 2012, <https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/Making-the-Connections-Report-First-National-Survey-of-OST.pdf>.

iv LA's Best, 2023, <https://lasbest.org/>.

v "2021-2022 Annual Report and Executive Summary," LA's Best, 2023, <https://report2021.lasbest.org/>.

vi "Summer Learning: The City is Our Classroom," Boston After School and Beyond, 2023, <https://bostonbeyond.org/approach/opportunity/summer/>. See also: Carrie Jung, "Boston Public Schools expand summer school programming with more 'enrichment' activities," WBUR, July 2023, <https://www.wbur.org/news/2023/07/17/boston-public-schools-summer-school-programming>. Jennifer Sloan McCombs, et. al., "Ready for Fall? Near-Term Effects of Voluntary Summer Learning Programs on Low-Income Students' Learning Opportunities and Outcomes," RAND Corporation, 2014, <https://bostonbeyond.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/RAND-Ready-for-Fall.pdf>.