

STEP

2.

Get Started:
Making Initial Governance Decisions

TIME TO COMPLETE: 1 MONTH

- Take Always NJ
- explore
- Multi-disciplinary Community Based team that makes recommendations for youth disposition (Atlantic County model)
 - Fees & Fines
 - Explore Evidence Based program matching



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Once you have decided to launch a campaign, you will need to create a core team and set up a governance structure for your campaign. One or more planning meetings, including with key partners such as directly impacted youth and families, can help you determine next steps. The following is a description of items to be discussed and decided on over the course of the meeting(s).

- Share the information you’ve already gathered, and give an additional opportunity for youth to share their perspectives and for stakeholders to talk about needed changes and potential allies, opportunities, and challenges together.
- Decide what capacity you already have and what you will need to raise funds and/or find volunteers and staff for.
- Discuss the need to have a **leadership team** or steering committee, as well as individuals/groups responsible for the following functions (each of these will be discussed in greater detail in this guide):
 - Organizing
 - Direct Action
 - Policy and Research
 - Media and Communications
 - Legislative and Budget Advocacy
 - Resource Development (e.g., fundraising, volunteer recruitment)
- Begin to determine who will be part of the leadership team and who will be responsible for each of these functions. Ensure that your leadership or steering committee is diverse and includes youth and families.
- Decide how **decisions will be made** by the campaign (e.g., consensus vs. majority rule), and what types/levels of decisions will be made by the leadership team rather than all campaign members. Your plan for decision-making should balance the strength that comes from having as many campaign members as possible share their experience and expertise (and feel invested in the campaign as something they help control), with the practical need for decisions to be made quickly and efficiently so that the campaign’s work can move forward. Operating by consensus is recommended by the Youth First Initiative, as it will allow for each member of the campaign to be part of the decision and thus be invested in and satisfied with the campaign.
- Adopt guidelines for how you will operate as a group. The following guidelines are adapted from Families and Friends of Louisiana’s Incarcerated Children (FFLIC), a non-profit organization made up of families and community in Louisiana.

FFLIC Guidelines

- **Respect for Everyone:** *We all come from different experiences and walks of life. We all have our areas of knowledge and unawareness. For meaningful work to be done in this group, we need to respect the strengths and weaknesses of all.*
- **Open Minds Only:** *You never know what you might learn from someone else’s experience or what someone could learn from you. Let’s be open to listening and sharing with each other.*
- **Oppression Exists—We Fight Against It Here:** *Since we all live in a world where racism, sexism, classism, ageism, and homophobia exist, it also exists within our group. As an organization fighting the injustices and oppression of the juvenile justice system, we must also actively confront and challenge oppression in all forms wherever it exists—especially among ourselves.*
- **Use the “WHOA”:** *We all learn together. If there is anything that doesn’t quite make sense, or if we’re moving too fast, just say “WHOA!” We’ll back up and explain/slow down so that we can all move forward as a group.*
- **Step Up/Step Back:** *If you are someone who feels comfortable speaking in groups and making comments, we ask that you “step back” and make room for others to do the same. If you’re not so comfortable speaking out, we invite you to “step up” and share your ideas with us in this supportive group setting.*
- **This is a Place for Solidarity:** *We are all here because we believe in fighting for justice, though we have many differences. We cannot let those differences be used to “divide and conquer.” We are much stronger as a whole.*
- **Be Aware of Time:** *There is always lots to talk about and get done whenever we come together. Let’s all be aware of time and try to monitor ourselves so that we can be sure to cover everything. If there are issues that come up that we don’t have time to talk about, we can always put it in the “Parking Lot” to talk about later.*
- **One Microphone:** *So that everyone can hear and be heard, only one speaker at a time. If there is noise in the background where you are located, please mute your microphone when you are not speaking.*
- **Default to Trust and Mine for Understanding:** *If and when someone says something that offends you, take the time to ask clarifying questions and trust that they meant no harm to you. Use the opportunity to help others grow as we all have.*

You will also need to decide on an **organizational governance structure**. Your campaign will need to receive money and other resources, as well as potentially pay employees and vendors, sign contracts, and take care of other business matters. You can create a separate legal organization to do this, typically a 501(c) (3) nonprofit organization, but it may serve your purposes better to find another organization that is willing to serve as your fiscal agent or fiscal sponsor.

Your leadership team should ensure that the fiscal sponsor organization and the relevant leadership within your campaign are both clear on the responsibilities of the campaign and fiscal sponsor. At a minimum, a written agreement should be developed that details how money will be kept separate, any fees the fiscal sponsor will receive, what decision-making authority each party will have, and how the campaign (and its public statements, etc.) will be attributed/referred to in relation to the fiscal sponsor. (For example, will your campaign be “a project of” another organization, or will it be its own independent entity apart from certain financial/legal issues?)

Effective Leadership for Your Campaign

To create real and lasting change, your campaign must be made up of and led by advocates who are **diverse** in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, geography (i.e., statewide constituencies) including youth and families who have been **directly impacted** and individuals from the most impacted communities. At the organizational level, you’ll also want to make sure that your coalition includes all relevant stakeholder groups and allies, including grassroots groups, youth-serving organizations, faith-based groups, health and mental health groups, disability rights groups, civil rights groups, and parent-led organizations.

"Engaging a wide range of stakeholders will position a campaign for success, but passionate people who are each deeply committed to solving intractable social problems will inevitably disagree. Successful coalitions recognize this tension and address it by engaging in open, honest, and frequent communications, as well as setting guidelines for processing conflict and having hard conversations. Coalitions also can increase their impact by ensuring that partners have clearly defined roles and responsibilities that take advantage of their areas of expertise and influence." — **Breaking Down the Walls**