

# Ready to Launch

A Campaign Starter Toolkit to Close Youth Prisons





# Welcome

Dear Advocate,

On any given day, nearly 50,000 youth are languishing in youth prisons and other out-of-home confinement in the United States. It isn't safe, it isn't fair, and it doesn't work. Yet, states continue to spend an average of \$150,000 per year to confine a youth and still devote the vast majority of their juvenile justice spending to youth prisons, spending more than \$5 billion per year.

The Youth First Initiative seeks to end youth incarceration by closing youth prisons, dismantling the youth prison model, and investing in community-based alternatives to incarceration. We believe that youth deserve a second chance and that the resources currently spent to incarcerate youth should be devoted to creating opportunities for rehabilitation and not for incarceration.

In launching a campaign, you will be joined by many other people throughout the country in taking action to change state policies that incarcerate youth and to provide opportunities for rehabilitation. This guide is designed to serve as a companion piece to Youth First's ***Breaking Down the Walls*** report highlighting campaigns in six states. The report is available on the website.

## **This guide contains:**

- *Key ingredients in a successful campaign*
- *What you need to know before you get started*
- *Tips on getting started and engaging people*
- *How to launch your campaign*
- *Examples and resources for strategies, activities, and tactics*

We hope you find this information helpful as we work together to make a difference in the lives of our nation's children.

Sincerely,

The Youth First Team

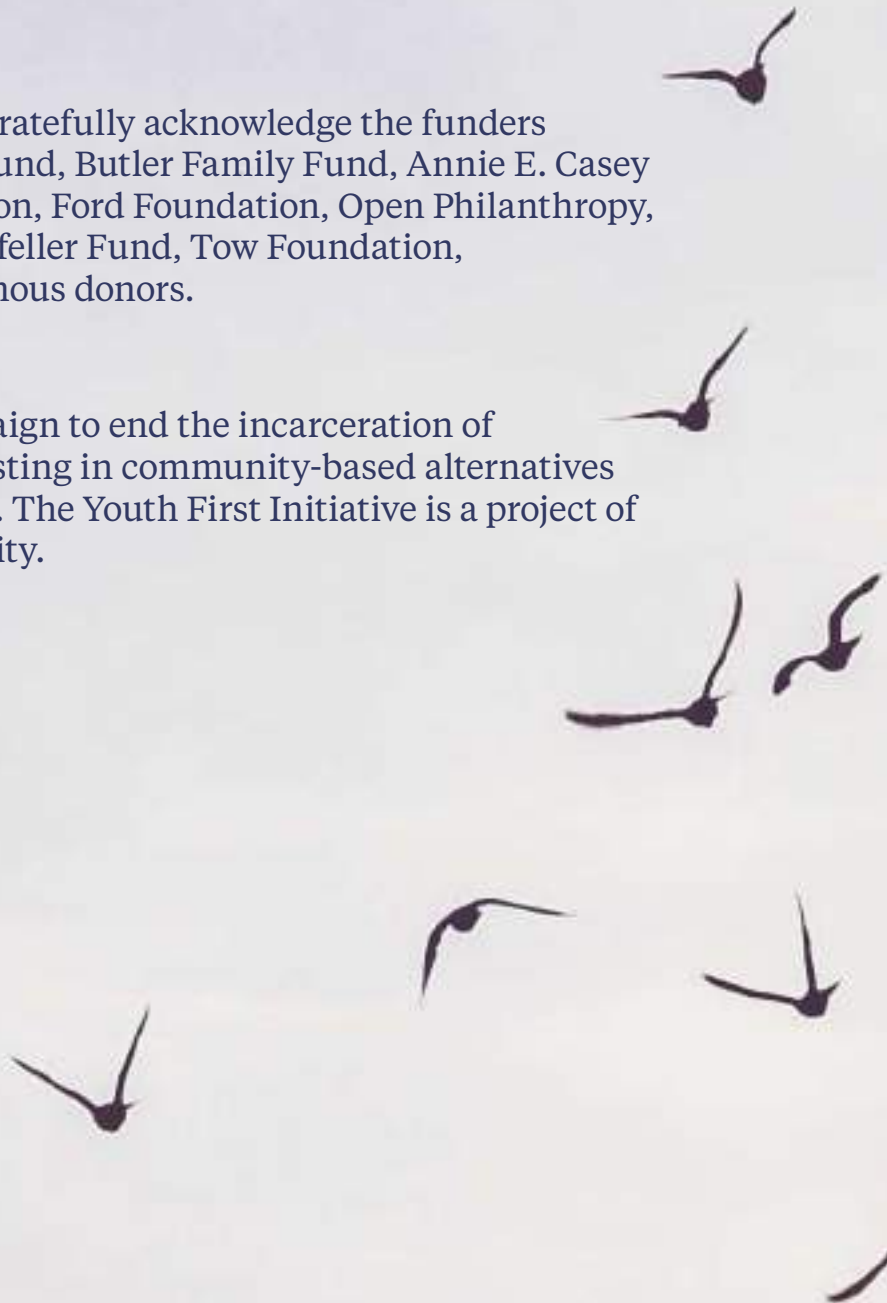


# Acknowledgments

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Youth First is a national advocacy campaign to end the incarceration of youth by closing youth prisons and investing in community-based alternatives to incarceration and programs for youth. The Youth First Initiative is a project of New Venture Fund, a 501(c)3 public charity.



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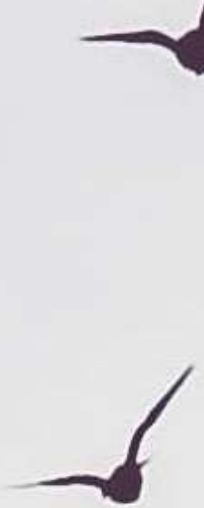
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# Introduction

## How to Use this Toolkit

Across the country, states have successfully reduced their use of incarceration and closed youth prisons, replacing them with rehabilitative models and community-based alternatives. Although justice system agencies, legislators, and other system stakeholders enacted many of these reforms, many reforms only came about because *community members* recognized that the current system did not work, and they demanded change. Mothers who had lost children to youth prisons marched in protest, young people bravely shared their experiences of abuse while incarcerated, and community members told their elected officials that they wanted their tax dollars to be used in ways that would actually benefit their communities.

*Ready to Launch* will guide you through planning and launching a campaign to end youth incarceration in your own state. Launching a successful campaign will require you to collect and use information, develop and carry out strategies, and—most importantly—mobilize your community to action. You will need to build a broad and strong coalition—including recruiting individuals and groups who have the knowledge and influence you need, and working together to build even more power. Because this guide is meant to create wholesale reform of the justice system, and ultimately to close youth prisons, it is not an “insider” strategy. While you should and will have moments of collaboration and consensus with system stakeholders, you and your team also must be prepared to take on the justice system when there is disagreement and to build strong public support on an issue many community members have never thought critically about before.

This guide includes strategies and tools from past campaigns, along with resources to learn even more. It is organized into steps to help you understand what you need to do, when, and why. You should read through the entire toolkit before getting started. This will ensure that you know what to expect, and it will help you decide whether you need a campaign and how to approach launching one.

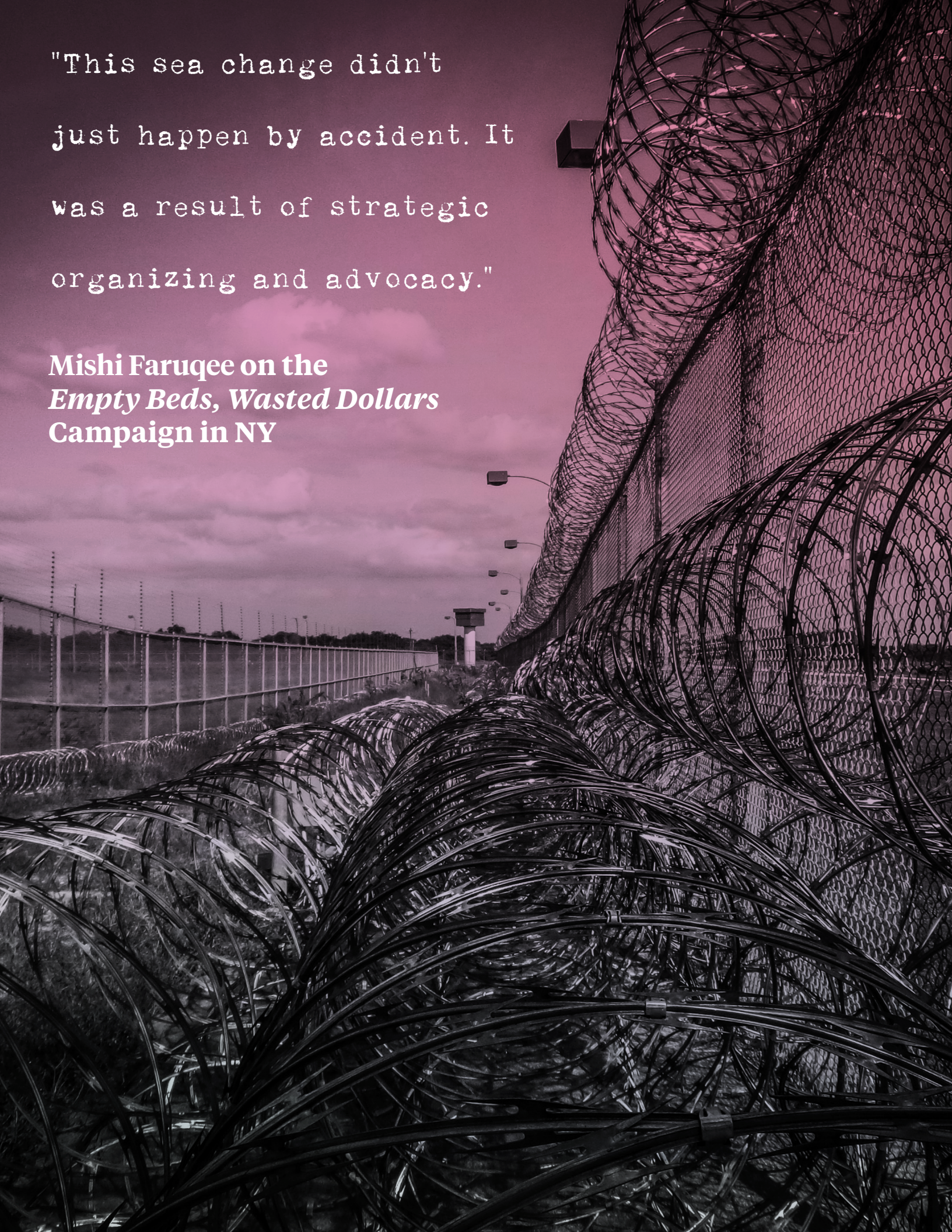
As you work through each step, you can go to the Youth First website at [www.youthfirstinitiative.org](http://www.youthfirstinitiative.org) for additional samples, templates, and resources to support your work at that stage. You also can download each section of this Kit separately to share with planning partners, allies, and others.

Launching and carrying out a campaign to close youth prisons will require many hours of hard work. For every big win there may be several setbacks. But your hard work will be reflected in the positive change this campaign will bring to your community and to the lives of young people who might otherwise lose their future to a youth prison.



"This sea change didn't  
just happen by accident. It  
was a result of strategic  
organizing and advocacy."

**Mishi Faruquee on the  
*Empty Beds, Wasted Dollars*  
Campaign in NY**





# What is Incarceration?

Any time a youth is deprived of their liberty, that youth is incarcerated. Throughout the U.S., places that incarcerate youth come in many forms and take on various names: training schools, diagnostic centers, assessment centers, residential treatment facilities, wilderness camps, forestry camps, shelters, boot camps, detention centers, juvenile halls, juvenile correctional centers, youth study centers, campuses, cottages, youth development centers, academies, challenge centers, youth centers, children's centers, youth camps, group homes, and girls or boys schools. These institutions often are named after the town or region where they are located and, on occasion, after nearby geographic features such as mountains, lakes, and rivers. These vague or pleasant names often obscure the fact that these facilities echo some of the most abusive elements of adult incarceration: solitary confinement, physical and sexual abuse, physical and chemical restraints, and widening margins of racial disparity.

## What is a youth prison?

Youth prisons embody facility features common to adult prisons, including:

- Large bed capacity (more than 30 beds);
- Correctional staff whose main role is to count and cuff youth;
- Locked rooms, cells, or units; razor wire fences;
- Locations that are geographically isolated;
- Minimal contact with family members or minimal opportunities to remain engaged with youths' communities;
- Limited access to appropriate educational, recreational, and other programming; and/or
- Practices similar to those used in adult prisons (see next).





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RICHARD ROSS PHOTOGRAPHY

# These qualities can be evaluated using the mnemonic L-O-C-K-E-D U-P:

## **L** = Large

Locking young people up in facilities that are too big can put them at higher risk for sexual assault, and large facilities also have seen higher rates of physical abuse and suicide attempts. Experts consider facilities that hold more than 25-30 young people to be too large.

## **O** = Old, Outdated, and Obsolete

Youth prisons are based on an outdated model that is “institutional,” taking youth out of their homes and communities and depriving them of the caring, positive relationships so necessary for development during a critical period of their lives. This outdated model has frequently led to abuse of youth, use of solitary confinement, and disruption of family and other positive relationships.

## **C** = (Adult) Correctional Approach

Youth prisons focus on punishment not rehabilitation. They are staffed by correctional officers whose role is security and control and who have little or no accountability. There is a culture of violence and victimization, including use of chemical restraints, such as pepper spray, and mechanical restraints, such as leg irons, handcuffs, wrap restraints, and hogtying. They often subject youth to isolation and solitary confinement. There are documented instances of physical and sexual violence, physical and verbal abuse, and neglect such as underfeeding and removal of sanitary napkins and toiletry items.

## **K** = Kids are locked up here

Incarcerated youth are kids with hopes and dreams for the future. They are kids just like other kids. They want to be writers, artists, filmmakers, poets, inventors, doctors, teachers, advocates, and organizers. They want to be agents of change and so much more.

## **E** = Excludes families

Youth prisons exclude families in so many ways. Families have limited contact with their children while incarcerated even though the families and the youth want more contact. Families are not part of any decision-making about what youth prison their child is sent to, what programming or treatment their child accesses, or other key decisions involving their child.



## D = Disparities in Race and Ethnicity

According to the latest data from the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), youth of color are significantly more likely to be incarcerated than White youth, comprising nearly 70% of incarcerated youth in the juvenile justice system. In 2013, Black youth were 4.6 times as likely, Native American youth were 3.3 times as likely, and Latino youth were 1.7 times as likely to be incarcerated as White youth. Despite the fact that youth incarceration has been cut in half in the last decade, racial and ethnic disparities have increased, according to analysis by the Sentencing Project.

## U = Under Scrutiny

The track record of youth prisons over the past fifty years is abysmal, as almost every state has experienced systemic or recurring maltreatment of youth in youth prisons and more than fifty lawsuits have been filed. According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation report *Maltreatment of Youth in U.S. Corrections Facilities: An Update*, the number of states in which there have been investigations, oversight issues, lawsuits, and allegations of abuse increased from 22 states to 29 states between 2010 and 2015.

## P = (Adult) Prison-like Features

A youth prison's physical features often imitate adult prisons, despite the fact that youth prisons were originally created as an alternative to adult prisons. (To be clear, not every youth prison has all of these physical features.) These features can include:

- (1) Razor wire fence around the perimeter of the prison and sometimes around specific buildings.
- (2) Concrete or brick buildings that look like adult prisons.
- (3) Locks everywhere: on cell doors, on hallways, in corridors and wings of the facility, and at the public entrance and exit.
- (4) Cells with steel doors, sometimes with steel beds and a small opening for food or wet cells with a toilet and sink.
- (5) Isolation or segregation cells, often with no sheets, blankets, or pillows.
- (6) Hardware that includes handcuffs, shackles, chains, restraints, and restraint chairs.
- (7) Furniture purchased from correctional catalogues.
- (8) Dining room tables and seats fastened to the floor with no cushions.
- (9) Communal bathrooms and showers visible by guards and with no privacy.
- (10) Clothing that consists of prison-like jumpsuits and undergarments that are sometimes washed in the general laundry and not returned to the original owner.
- (11) Generic personal hygiene products purchased (often at a higher cost) from correctional catalogues. Deodorant, body soap, and shampoo are sometimes not available or youth have to buy them, or products are not designed for all skin or hair types. Other products such as body lotion, toothpaste, toothbrushes, and dental floss are sometimes not available at all.
- (12) Food that is carb-loaded, greasy, and fatty with limited access to fresh fruits and vegetables. On occasion, youths' food needs are not provided for, dietary restrictions are not accounted for, and almost no culturally relevant and religious holiday foods are allowed. Utensils, trays, and cups are all plastic.
- (13) Glass separates youth from their families and loved ones.
- (14) Costly phone calls and videoconferencing instead of in-person contact.
- (15) Security stations with cameras separating staff from youth.

For more information on these indicators, see the LOCKED UP series, available at [www.youthfirstinitiative.org](http://www.youthfirstinitiative.org)

# STEP

# 1.

**Do Your Research:  
Asking Key Questions**

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TIME TO COMPLETE: 1-3 MONTHS





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AMANDA MAGLIONE

Before beginning your campaign, you will want to gather information about your state's youth prisons, and the individuals and groups who could help (or hurt) your efforts to close them. You will want to collect information about youth incarcerated in your state, as well as information about specific prison facilities, as outlined in the *Youth Prison Information Checklist* in this Toolkit. (See page 16)

Your state's *juvenile justice agency* is a good place to start when gathering data on youth incarceration. For other possible sources of state-level data, visit [www.youthfirstinitiative.org](http://www.youthfirstinitiative.org). In addition to online resources and state or national organizations, the most important sources of information are the **impacted youth and families in your community**, as well as advocates and stakeholders who may already be working to address these or similar issues. Conversations with these individuals can help you find out what is happening in your state, as well as identify potential partners for your campaign. Use the *Stakeholder Information Gathering Worksheet* as a guide for what to ask about during these early conversations.

"If you're involved in a campaign—make sure that it's bottom up and not top down. Campaigns need to be rooted in the communities that are most affected by youth prison and system abuse. My fear is that campaigns that are top down won't be successful in the long term because they can't actually get to the real root of these problems." — **Derrick Johnson,**  
*in Breaking Down the Walls*

In addition to individual or group conversations, you may wish to develop and circulate a survey to get the most input possible.

All of the information gathering described here and later in this guide is an ongoing process. You may not be able to answer some of the questions posed, and that may highlight a need or a problem (e.g., government entities might not be collecting important information, or you may not have yet connected with the right people to get the information you need). Just asking the questions will inform your campaign, help you develop relationships with the right stakeholders, and lead you towards an effective campaign strategy.

**Once you have gathered all of the information outlined in the *Youth Prison Information Checklist* and *Stakeholder Information Gathering Worksheet*, you can decide whether it makes sense to start your own campaign, work with an existing campaign, or pursue other strategies.**

*Here is a list of factors to consider in making the decision to launch a campaign—or not:*

- Have you confirmed that there are no existing campaigns working on this?
- Do you have a core group of people who are interested and ready to take action?
- Are there any existing conditions that you can leverage (e.g., a lawsuit over facility conditions, a budget crisis that could support a call to cut wasteful spending, a legislative champion or supportive governor or justice agency director)?
- Do you have the capacity to run and manage a campaign, or can you build that capacity (e.g., would an existing organization lend some staff and/or resources to get you started)?

## Researching Existing Community-based Services

While you are gathering information on youth prisons in your state, you also should try to map out what alternatives exist in your state to better meet the needs of youth and families (e.g., mentoring, family mediation/crisis intervention, substance use treatment). This will allow you to address any concerns about what will happen to youth when prisons are closed, and it can identify gaps that you may want to address when you push for funding realignment (e.g., spending money on behavioral health services rather than incarceration). If little information exists, this can prove to be a time-consuming exercise that may also *require a significant investment of resources*. Trying to assess that possible need early so that you can build it into your planning, if necessary, is an important consideration.



# Youth Prison Information Checklist

The following is a list of data points and other information you should gather to inform your campaign to close youth prisons in your state.

- ☐ **Total number of youth incarcerated in the state:**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- ☐ **Characteristics of incarcerated youth (race, ethnicity, gender, age); disparities in incarceration rates:**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- ☐ **Daily or annual cost to lock up youth:**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- ☐ **Recidivism rate (e.g., how many youth end up back in the system after release) for incarcerated youth and for youth who are involved with the justice system but not incarcerated:**

☐ **Number and locations of youth prisons:**

☐ **Design capacity and operating capacity of each facility:<sup>(1)</sup>**

☐ **Any prison-like features (e.g., locked rooms, cells, or units; razor wire fences):<sup>(\*)</sup>**

☐ **Use of correctional staff and approaches similar to those used in adult prisons (e.g., restraints and solitary confinement and/or military style regimen and uniforms):<sup>(\*)</sup>**

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1.)Number of youth in each facility, most commonly referred to as the average daily population (ADP). More than 30 beds is generally considered a large facility, as discussed further below.

<sup>(\*)</sup> Criteria that the Youth First Initiative considers in determining whether a facility is a youth prison. If at least 3 of these factors are present, YF will generally consider the facility to be a youth prison.



☐ **Number of staff at each facility:**

☐ **Union(s) representing staff at each facility:**

☐ **Which 2-3 cities send the most youth to these facilities?**

☐ **Distance from youths' homes and/or geographic isolation<sup>(\*)</sup> (e.g., how accessible they are by public transportation, and how long it takes to get there by public transportation and by car.):**

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Editable versions of all worksheets/checklists in this guide available at [www.youthfirstinitiative.org](http://www.youthfirstinitiative.org)

\*) Criteria that the Youth First Initiative considers in determining whether a facility is a youth prison. If at least 3 of these factors are present, YF will generally consider the facility to be a youth prison.



☐ **Reported or documented instances of abuse, violence, and neglect (e.g., press reports, federal or state investigations, lawsuits):<sup>(\*)</sup>**

☐ **Any other public information about the conditions at any of the facilities (e.g., government, research, or advocacy reports):**

☐ **Level or lack of family contact, involvement, engagement:<sup>(\*)</sup>**

☐ **Types of programming offered:**

☐ **Information on the towns where the facilities are located and whether the facilities are among the largest employers for those towns:**

# Stakeholder Information Gathering Worksheet

The following is a list of questions to ask impacted youth and families, advocates, and other stakeholders to inform your campaign to close youth prisons in your state.

- ☐ **Do you know of any efforts already underway to close youth prisons? Are there any other campaigns related to juvenile justice, e.g., to reduce incarceration, end the school-to-prison pipeline? Are there any existing commissions / task forces / oversight bodies looking at this issue?**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- ☐ **What concerns do you or others in your community have about the current juvenile justice system, particularly about youth incarceration? [Or, for systems stakeholders: How do you think the current system is working and where do you see a need for change?]**
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- ☐ **Who/what are the best sources of information about your state's juvenile justice system, its youth prisons, and non-secure alternatives?**



☐ **What does the public in your state think about the issue? Will your campaign be able to get public support for your goals? How much education is needed? What has TV/newspaper coverage of this issue looked like?**

☐ **How much funding is currently devoted by the state to alternatives to incarceration? Which government body decides where the funding for alternatives to incarceration go?**

☐ **Who would be best positioned to support this work? Which individuals or organizations have an interest in reform, and the dedication or power to help bring change about? How effective/powerful are these potential allies? Are there any potential concerns about them, or areas where they may need more support/education? Are there new or unlikely allies that you should be reaching out to?**

☐ **Who will fight this and why? What type of relationships/political power do they have?**

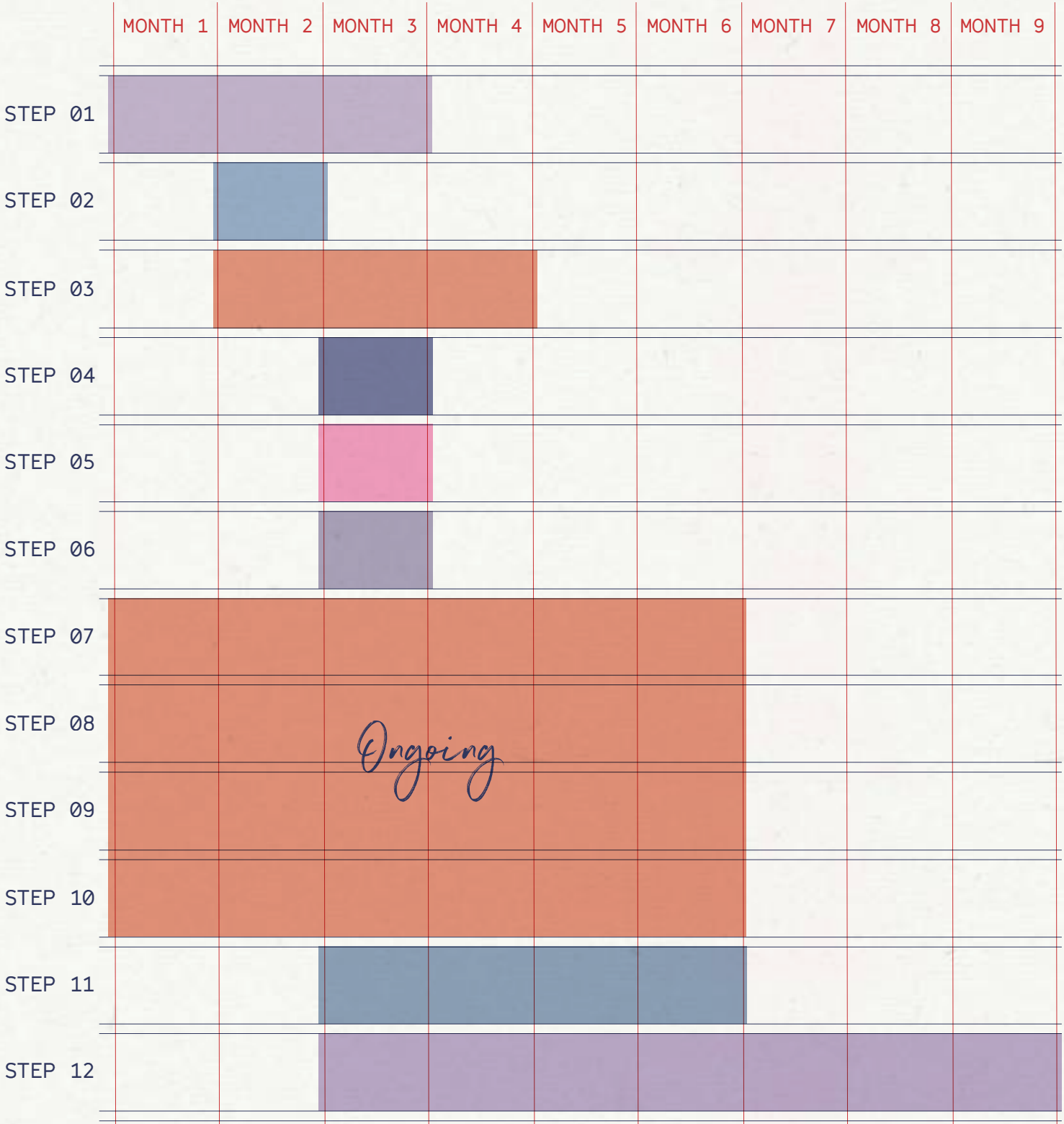
☐ **Are there any good/promising local practices, such as a highly effective alternative to incarceration, that could be highlighted or spread?**

☐ **What is the political landscape for change? Is there an election coming up where there might be an opportunity to push this issue? Is there an existing lawsuit or investigation of the youth prison? Has the youth prison been covered a lot in press reports over conditions of confinement? Is there a budget crisis that might prompt a need to cut the funding for the youth prisons? How supportive is your state leadership (governor, attorney general, house and senate)? Where is your state in its budget cycle/process (biennial budget or annual)? Are there clear legislative champions? Who currently leads the legislative committee with jurisdiction? What do you know about leaders of key agencies (corrections, health and human services)?**



# Timelines and timing for your campaign

The following chart will give you a sense of the timing for the Steps described in this Toolkit. A typical campaign will take about 6 months to get off the ground, and in some cases your campaign may take up to a year to go from an idea to a fully launched campaign.



# STEP

# 2.

**Get Started:**  
**Making Initial Governance Decisions**

---

TIME TO COMPLETE: 1 MONTH

explore

Multi-disciplinary Community Based team that makes recommendations for youth disposition (Atlantic County model)

- Fees & Fines

- Explore Evidence Based program matching





PHOTO CREDIT  
AMANDA MAGLIONE

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**

# STEP

# 3.

**What Do You Want to Achieve?:**  
Deciding How to Tackle the Issue  
and Developing a Theory of Change

---

TIME TO COMPLETE: 1-3 MONTHS





PHOTO CREDIT  
AMANDA MAGLIONE

One of the most important early steps in planning your campaign is answering the question “What do we want to achieve?” Answering this question—and conducting an analysis to determine the best approach—helps you set your mission and objectives, and it determines your overall theory of change for achieving them.

*Youth First has identified three major approaches or pathways to decarceration that campaigns can use (alone or in combination):*

1. **Closing youth correctional facilities.** This can be accomplished through:
  - State legislation
  - State budget action
  - Executive branch action (e.g., a governor issuing an executive order)
  - Litigation (facility closure due to a lawsuit is rare, e.g., in extreme instances of documented issues of deplorable conditions in a facility)
2. **Stopping the flow of young people into facilities/decarceration.** This can be accomplished through:
  - State legislation (e.g., limiting who can be incarcerated)
  - State juvenile justice agency action (e.g., policy or regulation limiting who can be incarcerated)
  - County-level judicial or court action (e.g., court rules/leadership on incarceration, or decisions by individual judges)
  - Probation supervision changes (e.g., prohibiting incarceration as a result of technical violations which result in youth being locked up)
3. **Investing in and/or creating alternatives to incarceration.** This can be accomplished by:
  - The state directing its federal funding or investing its state funding in alternatives
  - The state creating fiscal incentives and/or initiating capacity-building efforts for a continuum of care of alternatives
  - Counties applying for state funding, investing their own funds, and/or utilizing fiscal incentives
  - Counties supporting the creation of alternatives and contracting with programs that can provide them

Ultimately, each campaign will likely engage in all three approaches, but at the outset it is useful to determine which one will serve as the main focus and entry point into the work. It’s like having three doors into a house; you will eventually use them all, but which one



will you use first and most often? That will answer the question of how you plan to tackle the issue.

Your **theory of change** is the core guiding principle of your campaign. It represents your values and you will use it to establish the overall direction of your campaign. Throughout your campaign, it will help guide whether the strategies and tactics you consider make sense for your campaign.

One of the best ways to establish which pathway to take or approach to emphasize and a theory of change about how you will do the work is to organize a brainstorming session. Tips for a successful brainstorming session:

- Be sure to involve everyone in your group in the preparation for the session and the follow-up activities afterwards.
- Set an objective for the session, such as establishing at least 3 goals for your campaign.
- Include some time at the beginning of the meeting to recap the information you have gathered thus far.
- To inspire your group, consider sharing information from other successful campaigns or inviting a campaign organizer from a nearby state to talk about his or her experiences, especially around how they decided to tackle the issue. (You also can share written descriptions of other successful campaigns before or during your meeting (see [www.youthfirstinitiative.org](http://www.youthfirstinitiative.org) for examples).
- If your campaign has the resources, consider bringing in an outside individual who can act as a facilitator.

Your campaign should also have a **mission statement** and **values/principles statement**. Here are some examples from campaigns in Virginia and Wisconsin:



***RISE for Youth*** is a statewide, nonpartisan campaign coalition whose central goal is to develop a continuum of community-based alternatives to incarceration that will keep juvenile justice system involved youth closer to their homes and support networks while making our communities safer.



***Youth Justice Milwaukee** is a broad-based campaign advocating for the creation of community based, family-centered, restorative programs as an alternative to locking up children in Wisconsin prisons.*

*Our long-term goal is to close the Lincoln Hills, Copper Lake, and Mendota youth prisons and reinvest in community programs that build true safety for our city.*

*Youth Justice Milwaukee adheres to the following ten core principles in our work to ensure a fairer, safer, more effective, more cost-efficient juvenile justice system in Wisconsin. These principles are grounded in research that shows that our over-reliance on incarceration and confinement does not work for young people and does not make our communities safer. Instead of getting the support they need in the communities they come from, these young people are funneled through a system that is inhumane, unsafe, costly, and full of racial and ethnic disparities.*

- 1) We will center young people and families in our advocacy for transforming the juvenile justice system.*
- 2) We will only achieve true public safety when we promote everyone's well-being and when young people have the opportunity to heal and thrive.*
- 3) We believe in trauma-informed, restorative, community-centered approaches that use the least restrictive environments available.*
- 4) We believe in keeping families together and building solutions with the entire family.*
- 5) We do not write off or give up on youth – young people deserve unconditional love.*
- 6) We believe that we should treat youth and families with the utmost dignity and respect.*
- 7) We will be culturally sensitive, humble, and seek to eliminate racial and ethnic bias.*
- 8) To achieve racial equity, we have to transform the way the justice system treats youth of color from their first interaction with a police officer and in every part of the system.*
- 9) To achieve real and lasting change, we should not only seek to move people in positions of power, but also to build power in our communities.*
- 10) We will root our work within the larger social, historical and political context and work to make sure the community sees these larger systems.*



<b><u>Strategic Approach</u></b>	<b><u>Benefits</u></b>	<b><u>Drawbacks</u></b>	<b><u>Ensuring Success</u></b>
<b>Closures</b>	<p>Allows for a <b>direct attack on the system</b> (showing the system as a whole doesn't work, rather than talking about who should/shouldn't be incarcerated)</p> <p>Focusing on what's bad about the system provides a <b>tangible rallying point</b></p> <p>When you can <b>name the problem</b> (e.g., a specific youth prison), it's much <b>easier to organize</b> to fix it</p> <p>Can free up <b>millions of dollars</b> in funding to invest in alternatives</p>	<p>Often leads to <b>opposition from unions/staff and local lawmakers</b></p> <p>Staff may try to <b>sabotage your efforts</b>, e.g., by increasing violence within the facility or letting youth escape</p> <p><b>Employment concerns</b> in the town where the facility is located can cause resistance and must be addressed</p> <p>This is a <b>heavy lift</b></p> <p>Public concerns about safety, especially if it is the last facility in the state</p>	<p>You must be strategic in <b>choosing facility/ies</b> to target</p> <p>Assess where your <b>opposition</b> will be</p> <p>Recognize that this is <b>not a system “insider” approach</b></p> <p><b>Gear up</b> before going public. Once you call for closure, expect tremendous opposition</p>
<b>Stop the Flow/Decarceration</b>	<p><b>Does not require a direct attack</b> on the system</p> <p>Can be accomplished with <b>less conflict/confrontation</b></p> <p>Can be accomplished with action at the <b>state and/or county level</b></p> <p>Can be an important first step toward closure</p>	<p>Will <b>not necessarily lead to facility closures</b></p> <p>Won't reach <b>all populations</b></p> <p><b>Harder to rally around</b>, because it's less concrete</p>	<p>Consider the value of short-term wins vs. long-term goals</p> <p>Plan for the positive aspects of a county-level focus on specific policymakers (who know you and may be more supportive) as well as the negative (leaders and staff will change)</p> <p>Consider how to ultimately embed these changes in state policy</p> <p>Engage in creative advocacy (e.g. educate judges about prisons and encourage them to refuse to send youth)</p>
<b>Invest in/ Create Alternatives</b>	<p>A <b>positive</b>/strengths-based approach</p> <p>Builds community <b>capacity</b></p> <p>Creates investment and embeds resources in the <b>most impacted communities</b></p> <p><b>Harder for government to pull out</b> once invested</p> <p>Could also inform rationale for closure</p>	<p><b>Limited funding</b> availability/ need to identify where the funds will come from</p> <p>Sufficient local capacity/ providers <b>may not exist</b> due to previous lack of investment, support</p>	<p>Start thinking about the alternatives as soon as possible</p> <p>Draw on existing expertise (in your community and nationally)</p> <p>Develop recommendations on how to fund alternatives</p> <p>Simultaneously work to build community capacity</p>

This process should involve *as many of your campaign members and other stakeholders as possible*—both so that they feel invested in the campaign long-term and so that you can benefit from the expertise and insights they bring. As discussed earlier, this should include directly impacted youth and families, community members, and stakeholders who are affected by youth incarceration and/or are working to improve outcomes on related issues (e.g., education or health stakeholders).

*Tip:* **It's never too early to think about a home for your campaign**

You will likely find it easiest and most effective to start your campaign as a project of an existing nonprofit, using that organization to house and support the campaign in its early stages. Once your campaign is further along, you can always make the decision to separate into a separate legal entity. Just choose your “host” carefully, to ensure that your campaign is able to operate independently (with its own governance structure) and that it will not be pressured by concerns about government funding or preserving relationships with policymakers or private funders. (Also revisit the considerations around structure and governance discussed above.)

*Tip:* **Be explicit about racial injustice**

The racial and ethnic disparities in a jurisdiction's youth prisons can be easy to prove if data are publicly available, but how to address those disparities effectively as part of a campaign for change can be much more difficult. Among the campaigns profiled in the Youth First Initiative's Breaking Down the Walls report, those who did explicitly address racial injustices reported that it was essential to their campaign's success; some of those who did not do so expressed regret and the feeling that not doing so was a missed opportunity.

*Tip:* **All of the steps in this guide build on each other**

You will need to revisit the work and learning in each step throughout the process of building and launching your campaign. For example, the information, insights, and data you gathered in Step 1 should inform your theory of change and goals, and the process of developing the theory of change and goals should highlight what additional research may be needed. The leadership/governance structure you choose should allow you to set goals and determine your theory of change, but the goal-setting process may also highlight tweaks that need to be made or additional functions or stakeholders that need to be brought in.



# Goal-setting for success:

## 1.) Think Big and Bold!

Consider what it is that you really want your campaign to accomplish. You are focusing on how to end the incarceration of youth in your state, so what “goal” would have the most impact? Don’t limit your thinking at this stage in the process. Consider the biggest and boldest goals as your long-term goals—such as closing your state’s youth prisons—and then consider medium and short-term goals that will help you get there, such as creating fiscal incentives to place youth in community-based alternatives rather than incarcerating youth.

## 2.) What is a “Win”?

In addition to setting big and bold goals to accomplish in the long term, you will need to consider what a “win” is at every stage of your campaign. These can be small or large victories, from the first month to the conclusion of your campaign, such as:

- **Month 6:** An editorial in your state’s major newspaper calling on the governor to close a youth prison this year.
- **Month 8:** A hearing at which youth testify about their experiences in youth prisons.
- **Month 12:** The governor making a public commitment to close a youth prison or passage of legislation in one body of the state legislature to limit the placement of youth in youth prisons.
- **Month 18:** Your state’s legislature creating fiscal incentives to place youth in community-based alternatives to incarceration.
- **Month 24:** The introduction of legislation to limit the placement of youth in youth prisons.
- **Year 3:** The closure of one or more youth prisons.

## 3.) Use the SMART Goal “test”:

One way to think about setting your goals for your campaign is to use the SMART Goal “test” with the goal you establish.

### **SMART stands for:**

**S:** Specific  
**M:** Measurable  
**A:** Achievable  
**R:** Results-oriented  
**T:** Time-specific

As you consider setting your campaign goals, you will need to ask whether the goals you set are specific, measurable, achievable, results-oriented, and time-specific.

# STEP

# 4. ■

**Identify Targets:**  
Determining Who Has  
the Power to Give You  
What You Want

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TIME TO COMPLETE: 1-2 MONTHS





# Approaches

Once you've established what approach you will take and set goals you want to achieve, you will want to identify targets for your campaign. You can do this by determining who has the power to help you succeed. For example, revisiting the list of approaches from Step 3, we can identify numerous potential targets for each of the approaches:

## Closing youth correctional facilities.

- State legislation to close a youth prison: *Chair and membership of state House/Senate **judiciary** committee and their high-level staff.*
- State budget action to de-fund a current or planned prison: *Chair and membership of state House/Senate **finance, budget, or appropriations committee(s)** and their high-level staff.*
- Executive order to close a prison: *Governor and his/her high-level staff.*
- Juvenile justice agency decision to close a prison: *Agency director and staffers charged with facility management.*

## Stopping the flow of young people into facilities/Decarceration.

- State legislation to limit offense categories that can lead to incarceration: *Chair and membership of state House/Senate **judiciary** committee and their high-level staff.*
- Juvenile justice agency policy/regulation limiting offense categories that can lead to incarceration: *Agency director and agency policy lead.*
- Reduction in number of youth sent by courts to youth prison (through court rules/leadership on incarceration or decisions by individual judges): *Head of juvenile court; director of judicial education; all judges with juvenile jurisdiction.*
- Probation supervision changes (e.g., prohibiting incarceration as a result of technical violations which result in youth being locked up): *Agency director and probation/supervision lead.*



## Investing in and/or creating alternatives to incarceration.

- State investment in community-based alternatives: *Chair and membership of state House/Senate **finance, budget or appropriations committee** and/or **judiciary** committee and their high-level staff; juvenile justice agency director and key staff; leadership of legislative committees or state agencies relevant to proposed alternatives (e.g., mental health, education, child welfare)*
- County/city investment in and support of community-based alternatives: *Members and relevant staff of city/county council (particularly judiciary and/or finance committees); relevant local agency leadership (e.g., school superintendent, health agency director) and staff charged with contracting and oversight of service providers.*

Remember that legislators, agency heads, etc., often rely heavily on the judgment of their top staff (e.g., legislative director, deputy director), so those individuals need to be considered targets as well. Also consider which influencers can help you reach the targets above, such as the media or effective local grassroots organizers.

## Spheres of Influence

There are a number of different ways to achieve the same policy goals. In your initial discussions, all strategies should be considered, and then your campaign will decide on specific steps based on who has what authority or power in your jurisdiction, and what connections your campaign can leverage over those targets. Here are some examples of the types of influence held by several common campaign targets:

- **Legislators:** Can pass comprehensive juvenile justice reform legislation or laws that address youth prisons specifically, such as requiring the closure of a youth prison and a set date for closure (see *Essential Strategy: Legislative Advocacy*).
- **Executive branch (governor and juvenile justice agency leaders):** Make decisions regarding expansion or closure of youth prisons and investment in community-based alternatives (see *Essential Strategy: Executive Advocacy*).
- **Judges:** Judges have wide discretion to refuse to send youth to prisons.
- **Litigators/Legal community:** Lawyers can bring litigation regarding the conditions youth are subjected to in youth prisons.
- **Grassroots organizers/Community members:** Can bring public attention to these issues and put pressure on the individuals above to make changes.
- **Media outreach:** Can uncover information about current youth prisons, and other useful information for your campaign; can influence public opinion; can put pressure on legislators and others.

# STEP

# 5.

**What Will it Take to Win?:  
Developing Concrete Plans**

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TIME TO COMPLETE: 1 MONTH





PHOTO CREDIT  
RISE FOR YOUTH



Once you've decided how you will tackle the issue and have identified the targets who can help you succeed, you will need to develop specific plans for your campaign. This planning will be guided by one big question: *What will it take to win?* Or, put more concretely, what are the interim steps that need to happen to achieve your goals? All of the steps you have taken so far will help you answer these questions and develop your campaign strategy and campaign plan.

You can begin by organizing the information you've collected so far (goals, targets, approaches, etc.) into a strategy chart. Many campaigns use some version of a campaign strategy chart developed by the Midwest Academy. Here is the strategy chart describing the successful Close Tallulah Now! campaign in Louisiana:

JOIN THE MOVEMENT FOR YOUTH JUSTICE!



PHOTO CREDIT  
AMANDA MAGLIONE

# Close Tallulah Now!: Campaign Strategy

Goals	Constituency	Targets	Resources*	Tactics / Strategies
<p><b>Long</b></p> <p>Close Tallulah</p> <p>Divert money to Community Based Alternatives (CBA)</p> <p>Build a grassroots movement for greater reform</p> <p><b>Medium</b></p> <p>Pass legislation to close Tallulah and redirect funds to Community Based Alternatives</p> <p>Engage communities directly in legislative education/advocacy</p> <p><b>Short</b></p> <p>Coalition press conference/coalition letter</p> <p>Parents/Youth testimony at hearings</p> <p>Faith Action week</p> <p>Bill Cosponsor #'s</p> <p>Approval by Senate Judiciary, House</p>	<p><b>Who cares about this?</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Kids who are, have been, or are at risk of being incarcerated</li> <li>2. Parents of those kids</li> <li>3. Wider community who is negatively affected by juvenile incarceration</li> </ol> <p><b>Allies:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. faith community</li> <li>2. direct service providers</li> <li>3. advocacy groups</li> <li>4. some elected officials, teachers/ school programs</li> <li>5. labor orgs/unions</li> <li>6. students/ universities</li> <li>7. medical community</li> <li>8. youth groups</li> <li>9. some business groups</li> <li>10. judges</li> <li>11. "fair minded" folks</li> </ol> <p><b>Opponents:</b></p> <p>Agency director</p> <p>District Attorneys</p> <p>Sheriffs</p> <p>Governor</p> <p>Governor's friends in legislature</p>	<p><b>Primary</b></p> <p><i>Person with power to give us what we want:</i></p> <p>Senate Judiciary Committee Chair, Committee</p> <p>Senate Finance Committee</p> <p>House Judiciary Committee</p> <p>House Appropriations Committee</p> <p><b>Secondary</b></p> <p><i>People with influence over those with power to give us what we want:</i></p> <p>Legislators' constituents</p> <p>Judges and juvenile justice experts</p> <p>Campaign contributors</p>	<p><b>JJPL:</b></p> <p>4 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff (including campaign manager)</p> <p>funding for direct actions</p> <p>Access to so many kids and families</p> <p><b>Grassroots Leadership:</b></p> <p>4 part-time staff</p> <p>labor contacts</p> <p>national contacts</p> <p><b>Building blocks for youth</b></p> <p><i>Expertise and capacity building in:</i></p> <p>Media advocacy (LJ)</p> <p>Policy (TR, LR)</p> <p>Legislative strategy (LR)</p> <p>Legal support on bond issue (P-R)</p> <p>Fundraising &amp; resource sharing (MS, LR)</p> <p>National contacts (LR)</p> <p>Research &amp; studies (TR)</p> <p><b>Agenda for Children:</b></p> <p>New constituency</p> <p>National affiliates</p> <p>lobbyist</p> <p><b>MA</b></p> <p>Lobbying wisdom!</p> <p><b>Children Services Collaborative:</b></p> <p>New constituency</p> <p>Faith community</p>	<p><b>Media Advocacy</b></p> <p><i>Press releases, op-eds, letters to the editor, feature stories</i></p> <p><b>Legislative Education and Advocacy</b></p> <p><i>legislative goals, draft legislation, get support by champions, push for approval in committees, educate legislators by constituents</i></p> <p><b>Community Outreach and Education</b></p> <p><i>prepare outreach materials, host community forums, invite participation in the campaign</i></p> <p><b>Direct Action</b></p> <p><i>letter writing and calling targets, testify at hearings, community/press events to influence targets, e.g., faith action week, newspaper ad, vigil</i></p> <p><b>Lawsuit (ongoing)</b></p>

\*INITIALS USED IN THIS SECTION REFER TO SPECIFIC INDIVIDUALS OR ORGANIZATIONS.

Note that in Step 6 you will create a “power map” to map out targets, influencers, opponents, allies, and constituencies. This will help you determine how you can reach those individuals and influence them (or at least neutralize their opposition).

## **Creating a campaign plan**

The campaign chart on page 45 illustrates goals and the strategies to be used to achieve them (including prime targets and essential partners). The final step in turning this into a campaign plan that can guide your work every step of the way is adding a timeline, discrete action steps to carry out the tactics, and responsible parties for each. In the words of Wellstone Action, you will need to develop a written plan that lays out “who will do what with whom by when and for how much.” The plan should include:

- Long-term Goals
- Intermediate-term Goals
- Short-term Goals

For each short- and intermediate-term goal, the plan should specify:

- Action steps to achieve
- Date/time period for action/completion
- Responsible party

It may be helpful to have your chart include a column to mark the progress or status for each item.

Make sure you keep in mind potential barriers you’ve identified as you are developing your campaign plan, so that you include strategies to overcome each barrier. (You also will want to revisit and revise the campaign plan as you complete the later steps described here, particularly completing the power mapping exercise and developing the organizing plan.) Here are some examples of barriers you might face:

- Limited number of slots in community alternative programs and therapeutic residential programs
- Limited connections to community services for youth and their families
- Kids are released from facilities without someone to connect them to community resources
- System leaders lack knowledge about community models from other jurisdictions that work with system-involved youth
- Lack of knowledge regarding existing community stakeholders
- Parents are being dismissed; system is not seeking parents input or engagement



While the specifics and layout of your campaign plan can take many forms, the key to effectiveness is that it should:

- 1) Address the **goals** you identified in your early planning/brainstorming meeting(s);
- 2) Include **specific actions** (based on your agreed-upon strategies) and the **targets** for those actions; and
- 3) Ensure that at least one person has **“ownership”** for each task, and that each task has a **deadline**/timeframe for completion.

Here is a section of a sample campaign plan:

<p><b># : Long-term Goal:</b> Close Rand and West Oak youth prisons and redirect cost savings to create a continuum of community-driven, therapeutic programs that support young people and families.</p>					
	Intermediate & Short-term Goals	Strategies & Tactics to influence your targets	Responsible Parties	Time Frame	Status
#1.)	Influence members of the Juvenile Justice Task Force so that its recommendations reflect investment in community-driven, therapeutic programs instead of the current proposal.	Meet with Juvenile Justice Department (JJD) Director about the task force	AR & JL	May 2018	Completed
		Do background research on members of the task force. Create spreadsheet with information about what influences them, secondary targets, etc.	AR & FH	June 2018	
		Follow up with legislators who voted “no” on House Bill to determine who/what influenced their decision. The legislators who voted against were:	JJ & JL	July-Sept. 2018	

Intermediate & Short-term Goals	Strategies & Tactics to influence your targets	Responsible Parties	Time Frame	Status
	Identify who will meet with members of the task force based on previous relationships.	Leadership team	June 2018	
	Meet with members of task force and include youth and families in those meetings when possible.	AR/All	June-July 2018	
	Attend task force meetings and organize others to come and give public comment.	R & FH	May-November 2018	Ongoing
	Release a report that includes our recommendations for reforming the youth justice system to reflect research and best practices from other jurisdictions.	Communications team	July 2018	
	Community meeting/ public briefing on problems with current system and community-driven models being used in other places. Identify other experts.	Organizing team	August 2018	
	Meet with members of the finance/budget committees that will receive the report.	JJ & JL	September-October 2018	
	<b>Media Tactic:</b> Draft a press release with a press call about our report recommending changes to the current youth justice system.	Communications team	June 2018	

	Intermediate & Short-term Goals	Strategies & Tactics to influence your targets	Responsible Parties	Time Frame	Status
#2.)	Ensure the closure of Rand happens in a timely manner and no longer serves as a prison for youth.	Write Senator Jones to make sure he knows what the state should provide to former Rand employees.	FH	July 2018	
		Research issue of residents being sent to adult jails and follow up.	AR & FH	April 2018	Completed
		Communicate with criminal justice reform group that is being organized by RTK about closure of Rand and the possible repurposing for industrial uses.	JJ & JL	July 2018	
		<b>Media Tactic:</b> Op-ed with Senator Jones?	Communications team	July 2018	
#3.)	Get local leaders to publicly commit to and adopt a community-driven alternative plan to keep our youth at home in community-based therapeutic programs rather than in lock-ups.	Postcard campaign on what is necessary to rehabilitate youth and prepare them to become productive citizens.	AR/Communications team	May 2018 - November 2018	
		Event in Easton / community organizing.	FH & JJ	May 2	Completed
		Event in Capital City / community organizing	AR & JJ	May 17	Completed
		Youth Action Coalition Launch	AR/All	May 31	



	Intermediate & Short-term Goals	Strategies & Tactics to influence your targets	Responsible Parties	Time Frame	Status
		Event in Longview/ community organizing	FH & JJ	June 2	
		Event in Easton with Teens for Change	AR	August 1	
		<b>Media Tactic:</b> Press release/ invitations to actions at events above.	Communications team	1 week prior to each event	Ongoing

# Strategy Development Worksheet

The following is a list of questions to consider as you develop your campaign strategy:

- ☐ **Who do your targets listen to?  
Who are key influencers that may sway your targets?**

TARGETS

INFLUENCERS

- ☐ **What are some ways to neutralize or isolate your opposition?**

- ☐ **Are there key legislators (in leadership or on key committees) that you need to reach and how can you organize the constituents in these legislators' respective districts?**

LEGISLATORS

CONSTITUENT ORGANIZING TACTICS

- ☐ **What are the broader constituencies that you need to organize (impacted youth, family members, faith leaders, business leaders) and what are some ways to organize these specific constituencies?**

CONSTITUENCY	TACTICS

- ☐ **Who are the potential allies to engage in the campaign and what are some ways to engage these allies (endorsement forms, sign-on letters, postcards, etc.)?**

ALLIES	TACTICS

- ☐ **What are the key messages the campaign should convey and who are the different audiences for these messages (campaign supporters, legislators and policymakers, general public)?**

MESSAGES	AUDIENCES



☐ **What are some campaign materials you will need to engage various audiences (campaign brochures, fact sheets, reports)?**

☐ **What are some activities and tactics to raise the profile of your campaign (public events, media outreach, advocacy days)?**

# Campaign Check-in Worksheet

At the end of Step 5 in your campaign planning process, having completed the steps and exercises outlined in the *Youth First Initiative Ready to Launch: Campaign Starter Toolkit to Close Youth Prisons*, you should be able to answer these questions:

☐ **What is your ultimate, long-term goal?**

☐ **What are the major strategies and tactics you will use to achieve your goal?**

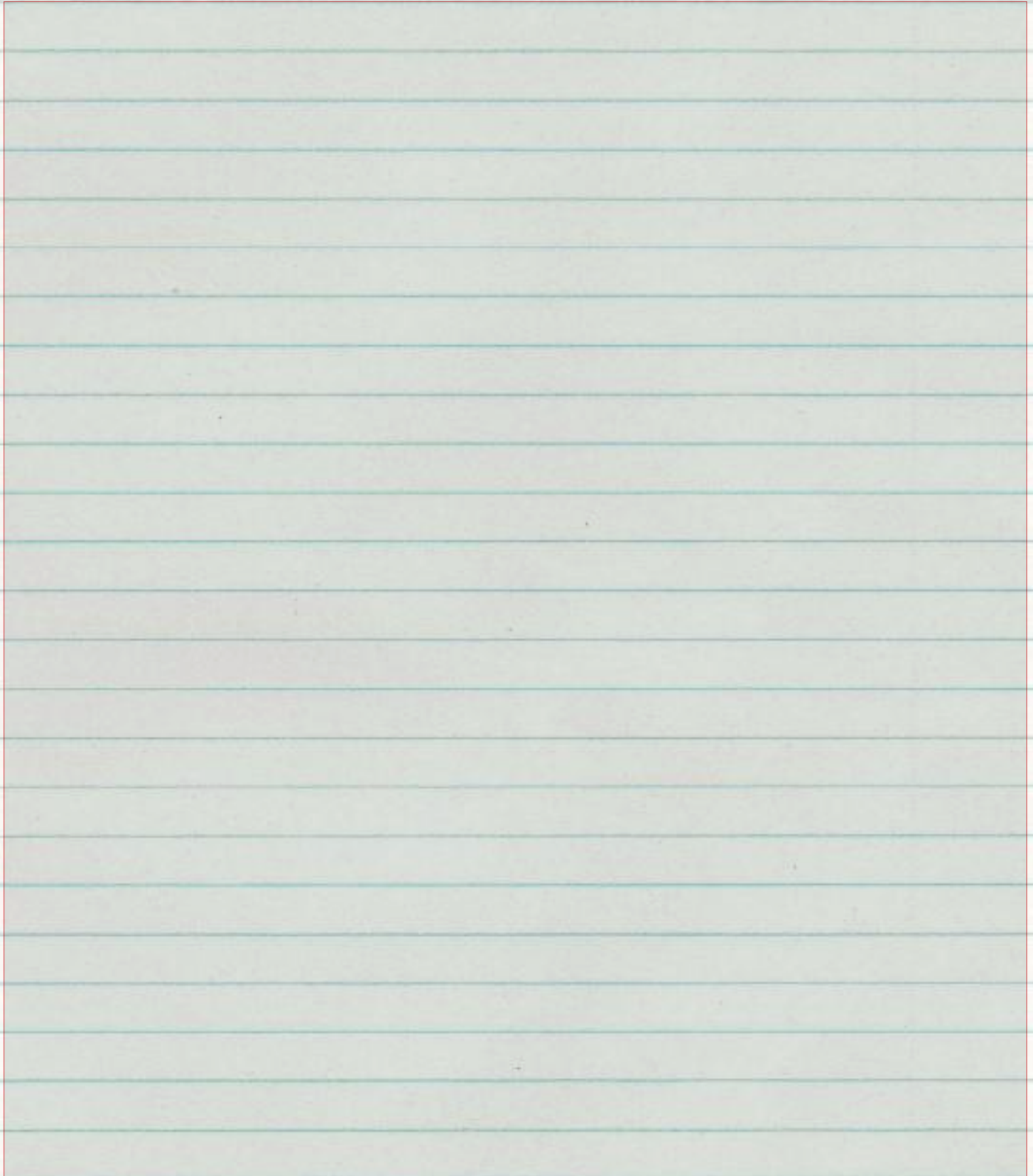
☐ **Who are your allies? Who are your opponents?**

ALLIES

OPPONENTS



- **Who are the targets you need to influence to achieve your goals?**  
**How are they connected to your allies and opponents? (List or diagram)**





# STEP

# 6 ■

**Who Will Be Involved  
and What Will They Do?:  
Creating an Organizing Plan**

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TIME TO COMPLETE: 1 DAY





**YOUTH JUSTICE**  
**MILWAUKEE**  
Our Community Our Youth

PHOTO CREDIT  
YOUTH JUSTICE  
MILWAUKEE

Once you have figured out what it will take to win, you can answer the question “Who will be involved?” This will include completing a power mapping exercise and creating an organizing plan to identify the allies and constituencies you need to mobilize, and how you will do so.

*Tip:* **Organizing plan vs. campaign plan**

Some elements of the organizing plan may be included in the campaign plan, but the campaign plan is much more focused on moving your targets, while the organizing plan focuses on marshalling and empowering your allies.

The [New York No More Youth Jails] campaign really took the time to truly involve young people in the work and setting the policy and campaign goals. We did a Power Mapping process that really helped young people understand relationships of power. Through this process we broke down who the decision-makers were and how we could build our own power. We had someone else come in and really break down the city budget process for us – the difference



between the capital budget and the expense budget and where the \$65 million could be reallocated. We got a deep education in so many things. We learned things that we never learned in school.

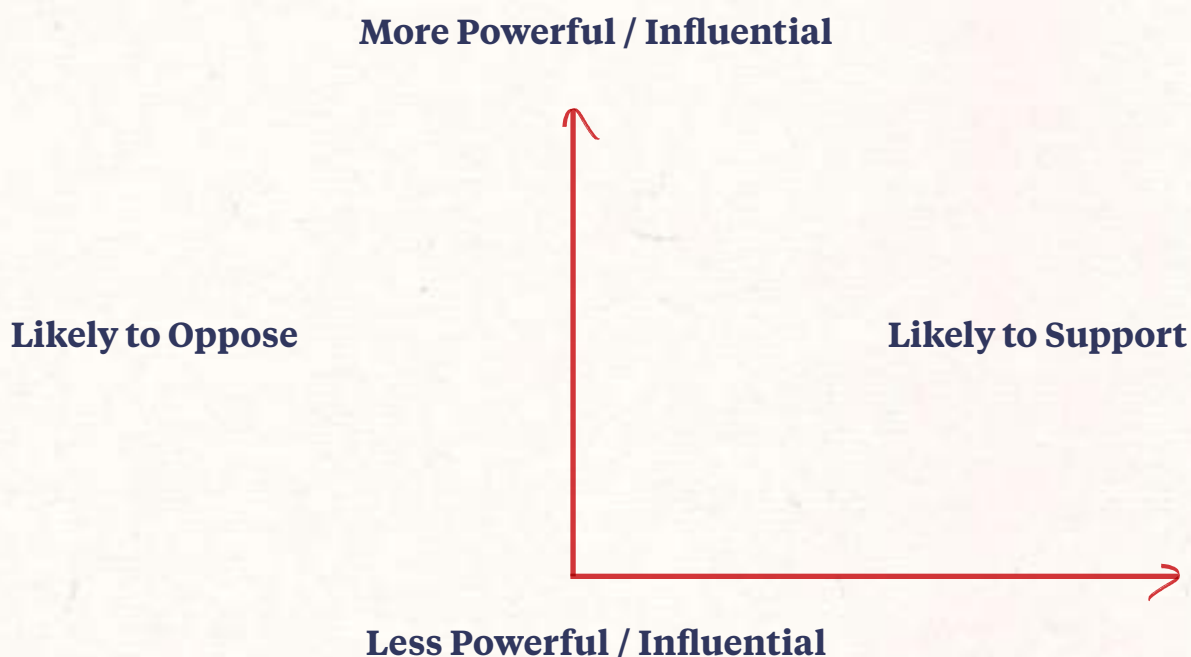
Being involved in the campaign gave a reason, rhyme, and language for me to understand all the things that have happened to me. I now understood internalized oppression. I realized that a lot of things that happened to me were not my fault—how I kept getting arrested for non-violent offenses—how my experiences were part of larger oppressive policies against communities of color." — **Chino Hardin,**  
***in Breaking Down the Walls***

# Power Mapping

Completing a power mapping exercise will help you develop an organizing plan. This exercise will help you identify power dynamics among your campaign targets, key influencers, and opponents, which will determine your strategies and next steps. The power mapping exercise will also inform and support your efforts to build power among your allies and constituencies in order to move your targets to your side.

Here is an example of how a campaign could create a power map:

- 1) Identify the **problem** you are trying to solve, e.g., youth in our community are being sent to youth prisons, and your ultimate **goal**. (See Step 3 of this guide for more specific guidance on goal-setting.) *Write out your problem statement/goal at the top of a large sheet of paper/posterboard.*
- 2) Determine who your **targets** are. These are the leaders or influencers who hold power over this problem, e.g., the director of the juvenile justice agency, the leaders of the relevant legislative committees. This includes individual policymakers likely to support your efforts, as well as those likely to oppose. Note that you want individual names listed here, but you may need to start by determining the major institutions, groups, or organizations related to the problem (e.g., the prisons themselves, the state juvenile justice agency, the courts, the legislature, the unions for prison workers) and then conducting quick research to find the names of key leadership within relevant agencies, committees, etc. *Write these names out on post-it notes and place them on an axis similar to the one below:*



3) Think about who **influences** the individuals on your chart but are not yet listed. This includes both their personal and professional relationships. Think broadly, and note areas for further research (e.g., for an elected official, who are his/her major donors or key constituents?) *Add those names to the diagram (using a different color marker or post-it).*

4) Discuss who you expect your **opposition** to be, again thinking broadly. Groups who have opposed past prison closure campaigns in some states include unions, governors, law enforcement, prosecutors, towns where the prisons are located, legislators representing those areas, and juvenile justice agency leadership. (Some of these groups also have supported closing prisons in some states, so make sure to research their position in your jurisdiction.) *Add those names to the diagram (using a different color marker or post-it).*

5) Determine who your **allies or potential allies** are by asking who in your own networks are connected to the individuals listed above (e.g., a former colleague is now chief of staff for an important legislator, or a faith leader we work with has a good relationship with the head of the juvenile justice agency). This can include both current campaign allies and others you know who may not yet have become involved with the campaign. *Add those names to the chart, if they are not already there, using a different color marker or post-it.*

6) Moving beyond individual names, you'll also want to identify your key **constituencies**, or groups that you will need to organize (e.g., impacted youth and families or residents in the town where the prison is located.) *Add those groups to the chart, if they are not already there, using a different color marker or post-it.*

7) Focus on the **relationships** that exist and how to get from your group – the campaign members and supporters – to the individuals who hold the power to fix the problem or to those who could meaningfully interfere with your efforts. *Draw lines on your diagram to visually “map” the relationships and pathways to see how the groups you need to influence are connected (or not) to your campaign members/supporters.*

8) Use the information on your chart to **make decisions about priorities and next steps**. Can some campaign members follow up with individuals who have a lot of lines/connections, while others do some additional research on targets who are deemed high priority but have few or no lines/connections? These next steps will become part of your *organizing plan* and *campaign plan*.

*Tip:* You can also use this exercise to tackle much smaller elements of your campaign (e.g., How do we get supportive press coverage and ensure public opinion is on our side? How do we get a study/reform commission created?)



# Creating an Organizing Plan

To achieve your goals, your allies will need to influence the most powerful decision-makers related to youth prisons in your state. To make this happen, you will need to take concrete steps to increase the power of your allies (e.g., move them up the “influence level” axis on your power map). The organizing plan includes the allies and constituencies you need to mobilize, as well as steps for doing so. It also includes tasks that can help create or increase the power of those allies, and it organizes all of this information into a written plan, with timeframes and responsible parties. Here is a sample organizing plan:

<b><u>Activity</u></b>	<b><u>Interim steps</u></b>	<b><u>Lead/Others involved</u></b>	<b><u>Timeline</u></b>
Hold visioning sessions with youth and families to get their input and expertise to develop community-driven alternative plan	Set up Youth and Parent Engagement Workgroups to organize visioning sessions  Find location and set date  Develop facilitation plan/ identify facilitator  Publicize/invite attendees  Provide stipends to youth and families  Conduct youth/family surveys	KL  JD  Youth and Parent Engagement Workgroups	October (date/location identified by August 1, publicize starting Sept. 1)
Hold training sessions for system-involved youth and families to engage in the campaign and amplify their voices	Set up a Youth Engagement Workgroup to organize trainings  Set up a Parent Engagement Working Group to organize trainings  Find location and set date  Develop agenda/training materials  Publicize training/invite attendees  Provide stipends to youth and families	KL  JD  Youth and Parent Engagement Workgroups	Bi-monthly starting in November

*Tip:* In addition to organizing/hosting your own events and meetings, your campaign members should regularly attend community and juvenile justice gatherings to network and spread awareness of your campaign and its goals. In the publication *Families in Power*, Grace Bauer suggests that advocates have a rap, or “30 second commercial about your belief” about what needs to change, which you share both at justice-focused events and in your everyday life (e.g., the hair salon, the PTA). She also suggests bringing flyers and business cards with you at all times, so that you can leave contact info for individuals who might be interested in following up with you, as well as following up directly with anyone who expresses interest.

Develop a concrete outreach plan to bring in potential allies and expand the coalition of groups involved	<p>Create a timeline for activities/public events</p> <p>Review power-mapping notes and conduct additional research on potential allies</p> <p>Assign specific campaign members to follow up with specific potential allies</p>	<p>AK</p> <p>ZL</p> <p>JR</p>	September
Develop shared principles to create trust and set of values to base the campaign work and outreach	<p>Schedule and hold brainstorming meeting</p> <p>Identify facilitator</p>	<p>AK</p> <p>ZL</p> <p>JR</p>	August
Develop a campaign name and identity to raise visibility	<p>Identify experts on branding who could help (e.g., local university media studies department, communications director from advocacy group, PR/Marketing firm)</p> <p>Review examples from other campaigns</p> <p>Schedule and hold meeting to develop, or discuss at regular campaign meeting</p> <p>Circulate poll with potential names to gain maximum input</p>	<p>ZL</p> <p>JR</p> <p>ED</p>	August

"The outreach for the No More Youth Jails campaign worked really well. As a young person, I learned that we had allies to help us. I learned that it was just not my voice out there alone. I was educated about the youth justice system. There are so many things that youth in the system are not aware of. I was educated on NYPD's "Stop and Frisk" and what to do when you are stopped by the police. I learned that youth in New York's criminal justice system become adults at 16, and I learned about how youth of color are stereotyped in the media. Most of all, I learned that there are really intelligent young people who have been involved in the system. And because I had become involved in the system, it motivated me." — **Andre Holder, in *Breaking Down the Walls***



# Addressing Opposition

Building power among your supporters and bringing those already in power to your side will be cornerstones of your campaign, but there will always be some key individuals or groups that you will not be able to sway. Your campaign will also have to decide how to neutralize, placate, or isolate those stakeholders. In New York, for example, the unions for Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) facilities staff objected to the closure of youth prisons because they feared lost jobs. The Youth First publication *Breaking Down the Walls* explains the different strategies New York's "Empty Beds, Wasted Dollars" campaign took to address this opposition while still achieving their goals:

*OCFS and advocates addressed this by ensuring that jobs would not be lost and that communities where the facilities were would benefit from their closure. To address concerns about job loss, OCFS guaranteed employees a job elsewhere in OCFS or for other state agencies for at least the first three years after closing the facilities. The Governor's office also sent a clear message that if upstate communities needed jobs, they would work to create jobs upstate but not create a local economy on the backs of young people.*

*The Cuomo Administration went on to create a special economic development fund for counties, which put about 13 or 14 million dollars in a fund for counties that were affected by closures so that they could use that money to create other economic development opportunities in the community. The local counties felt that these facilities were an important source of employment and investment in the community. The state invested in the local sewer system and paid for upgrades or taxes to support infrastructure development in these counties. It was successful because when the state closed facilities, people saw these investments in their communities.*

Amoretta Morris, one of the leaders of DC's successful campaign to close its Oak Hill youth prison, recalls the strong opposition their campaign faced, saying in *Breaking Down the Walls*, "It helped to bring in young people, so those who opposed could actually talk to them face to face. What people will say about the young people not in their presence is different from what they will say when they are there."

"Face-to-face visits with other parents is one of the first and most important steps you can take to begin organizing. In my work with [Families and Friends of Louisiana's Incarcerated Children], folks often said that the main reason they came to a meeting and stayed in the organization was because they felt they had a relationship with one of the organizers or other members. Getting to know others and finding out what they believe, what their experience has been, and what strengths they bring, are priceless assets in organizing." — **Grace Bauer,**  
***in Families in Power***



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# STEP

## 7.

### Choosing Strategies: Developing a Multi-Faceted Campaign

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TIME TO COMPLETE: 1 MONTH  
(MAY NEED TO BE REVISITED THROUGHOUT CAMPAIGN)

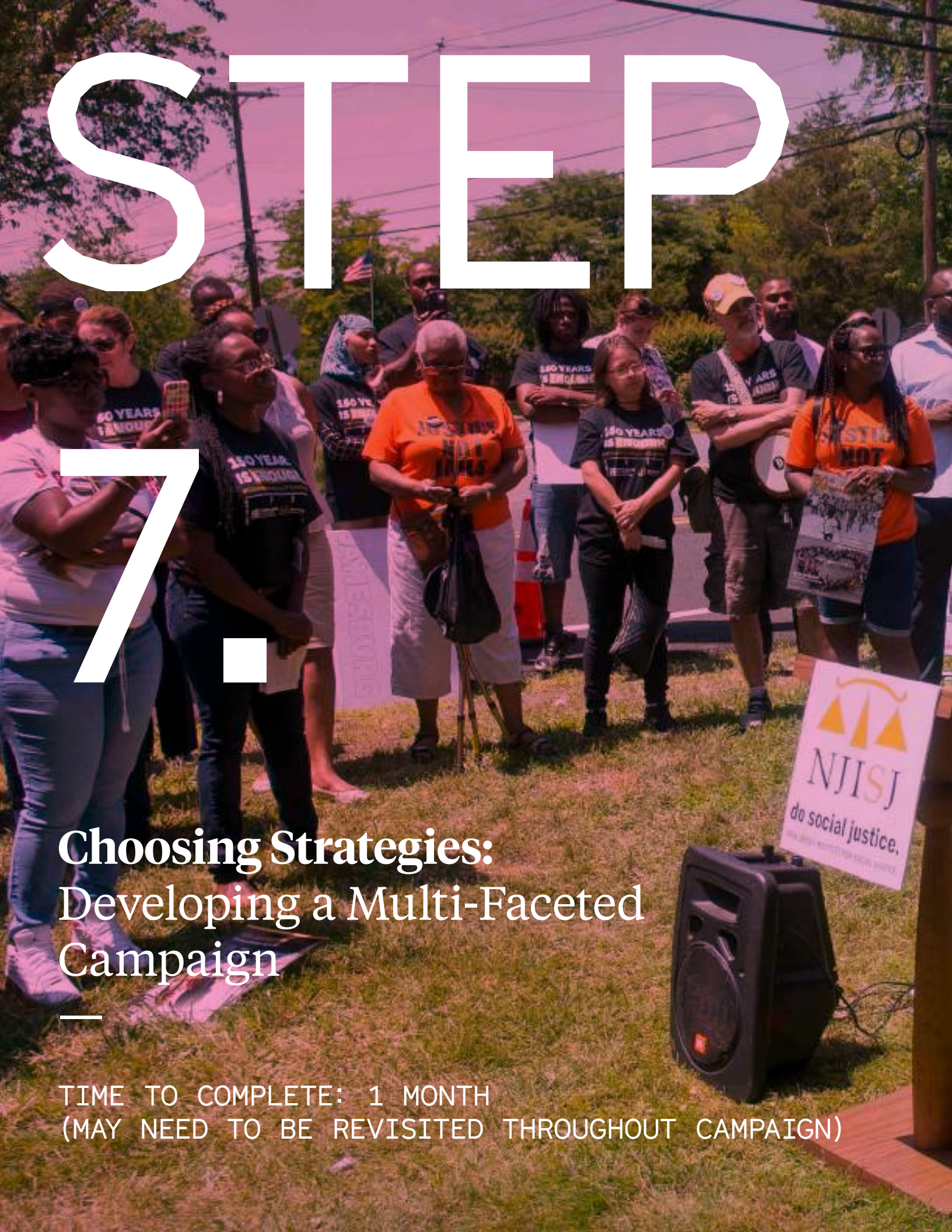






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DANIEL HEDDEN  
PHOTOGRAPHY



At this point in your campaign, you will have chosen one or more approaches to use in your campaign and your goals. In this Step, you will learn more about effectively using the major strategies to achieve your campaign goals. For each one you choose, you will need to answer the question “What specific actions will be undertaken?” and update/revise your campaign plan accordingly.

**As a reminder, the major strategies include:**

- Legislative and budget advocacy
- Executive/agency advocacy
- Litigation and judicial action
- Grassroots organizing
- Media outreach

How and when you use these techniques, and whether they are a support or a centerpiece to your campaign, will vary according to the specifics of your jurisdiction, as discussed earlier. Apart from litigation, however, your campaign must include all of these to at least some degree. For example, in your state, the juvenile justice agency may have the authority to close a youth prison, but you will still need legislative support because of the potential job losses.

Even if your legislature passes prison closure legislation driven by its judiciary committee, you’ll need to work with the budget committee to ensure that the funds saved are reinvested in community-based alternatives to incarceration. The executive branch, particularly the governor and the juvenile justice agency director, must also be addressed in your tactical decisions as they will have a lot of influence over legislation, budget, or programmatic changes.



"Working in coalition forced all of us to stretch outside our respective comfort zone. The lawyers realized that legal action wasn't going to solve the problem. The organizers realized that rallies weren't going to get it done. Policy advocates knew it couldn't be solved by legislation. We looked deeply at our system and worked together to execute a multifaceted campaign."

—Derrick Johnson,  
*in Breaking Down the Walls*

# Putting the pieces together

Launching a successful campaign to close youth prisons involves developing and deploying many elements, often on overlapping timeframes. Here are some of the key elements shared in this Toolkit:

Campaign Element	Definition	Example
Vision	What you want to create	A world without incarceration
Mission	What your campaign is seeking to do and how	<i>"RISE for Youth is a statewide, non-partisan campaign coalition whose central goal is to develop a continuum of community-based alternatives to incarceration that will keep juvenile justice system involved youth closer to their homes and support networks while making our communities safer."</i>
Theory of Change/Values	How you will approach the work	<p>1)"We will center young people and families in our advocacy for transforming the juvenile justice system.</p> <p>2)We will only achieve true public safety when we promote everyone's well-being and when young people have the opportunity to heal and thrive.</p> <p>3)We believe in trauma-informed, restorative, community-centered approaches that use the least restrictive environments available.</p> <p>4)We believe in keeping families together and building solutions with the entire family.</p> <p>5)We do not write off or give up on youth – young people deserve unconditional love."</p> <p>(From Youth Justice Milwaukee, see Step 3 for full list)</p>
Approaches	Which pathway you will take to get there	Close youth prisons; Reduce incarceration; or Create community-based alternatives



Goals	What you want to achieve	<b>Examples:</b> Close a specific youth prison Pass legislation to demolish / repurpose the youth prison Invest the savings in community-based alternatives for youth Ensure oversight of how the funds are allocated
Targets	Individuals who have the power to give you what you want	Governor, specific lawmakers, juvenile justice agency director
Campaign Plan	How you will win / achieve your goals	Midwest Academy Chart/Close Tallulah Now! Strategy Chart (see Step 5 for examples)
Organizing Plan	The allies and constituencies you need to mobilize, and how you will do so	See sample <i>Organizing Plan</i> in Step 6.
Strategies	The approaches/types of advocacy you will use	Media outreach, legislative/ budget advocacy, executive/agency advocacy, community organizing, legal approaches
Tactics	Specific actions	Rallies or marches, letters to the editor, lawsuits, legislative briefings/ hearings
Message	The “brand” that encompasses what you stand for (including a logo and tagline)	 <p><i>Prison is no place for kids Prisons don't work</i></p>

# Essential Tactical Strategy: Executive Branch Advocacy

The Governor's office and the state juvenile justice agency (normally part of the executive branch), can exert enormous influence over the closure or expansion of youth prisons, as well as funding of community-based alternatives. Although some youth prisons are operated at the state level, and some are run by counties, the governor will always be a target in your work. You will first need to determine whether he or she has a strong position on the issue, and if not, whether you can influence him or her.

Since the governor often appoints the head of the juvenile justice agency as part of his/her cabinet, you can potentially impact the issue by recommending people for your governor to appoint to this position. These appointments are often considered after a new governor has been elected during the transition process so it is important to get recommendations to the transition team during the period after the election and before the governor's inauguration.

It will be crucial for someone in your campaign coalition to establish a working relationship with the juvenile justice agency director. It is also good to have other connections with senior staff in the agency who are civil servants (i.e., their positions don't change when a new agency head is appointed) and to sign up for newsletters and updates from the agency.

*Tip:* Reviewing your governor's past public statements, including media interviews and responses to candidate questionnaires, can help you determine where he or she stands on youth justice issues, as well as potentially offering a way to hold him or her to past promises (e.g., investing in children).

If your governor can be convinced to support your campaign, you will need to determine how to aid him or her (e.g., by providing research, helping gain positive press) and how to turn that support into action (e.g., an executive order or deal with the legislature). If your governor cannot be convinced to support closing youth prisons or to at least not act against your efforts, you must tackle the much more difficult task of neutralizing that opposition. This means that media outreach and public opinion will become an essential part of your campaign. If the governor has an election coming up, you can also use that as an opportunity (see Youth First's *Your Vote is Your Voice: A Toolkit for Youth Justice and Electoral Advocacy*.)

You may also need to influence local level executive branch leaders, for example the mayor of the city where a youth prison is located or where most of the youth in your prisons come from, or the county executive of a county-administered prison. In those cases, an organizing strategy that focuses on their constituents (e.g., residents of that city or county) will be key.

# Essential Strategy: Legislative and Budget Advocacy

## Why Get Involved with “Legislative Advocacy”?

Your messaging, direct actions, and organizing tactics will help create the public will—and the pressure—for change, but often the mechanism for this change to happen will be a change in the law, regulations, or official agency policies. Having changes made at this level will institutionalize them in a way that will live on when key leaders or decision-makers change.

Budget advocacy is a key part of legislative advocacy because funding—or lack thereof—drives action. Getting rid of funding to build capacity for more prison beds or hire guards can decrease incarceration, and having adequate funding for essential community-based services is key to ending over-reliance on residential placements. As many campaigns are seeking to reinvest the dollars from youth prison closures to community-based alternatives to incarceration, the budget process is where this “reinvestment” can take place.

*Tip:* The research and data gathering you have done will also support your legislative advocacy. The reports and fact sheets you create can be shared with legislative staff as the grounds or rationale for policy changes you request.

## Legislative Action—What to Advocate for?

Youth First’s Legislative Options for Youth Decarceration Reform (available at <http://www.youthfirstinitiative.org/>), outlines the key elements that legislation should include in order to increase public safety, decrease the number/proportion of youth of color in prison, and realign funding to approaches that work:

## Closing Youth Prisons

Legislation aimed at closing prisons should:

- Explicitly require the closure of a youth prison, including a concrete timeframe for closure (e.g., within 2-3 years).
- Zero out funding for youth prisons in agency budgets.
- Ensure that the building can no longer be used to house youth and direct the relevant agencies to find a productive use for the abandoned prison building or demolish the building and be sure to preserve some of the funds freed up from closure for these purposes.



- Ensure that the Department of Labor or local economic development agencies help create or connect affected workers to jobs in other areas.

## **Community Reinvestment**

Legislation (or budget provisions) should ensure that money saved on incarceration is used to support youth by requiring that:

- All money saved from closing a youth prison is reinvested and follows the youth in the most impacted communities, funding programs and services for youth in their communities.
- Fiscal incentives, including reimbursement by the state, are offered to counties to keep youth in their communities.
- Local continua of care<sup>(2)</sup> for youth involved in the delinquency system are supported and strengthened or created if they do not currently exist.

## **Closing the Front Door**

Legislation should decrease the number of youth entering the system and therefore possibly being adjudicated to a youth prison by:

- Forbidding youth from entering a youth prison or other secure facility for misdemeanors.
- Ensuring the state is complying with federal law prohibiting the detention of status offenders, and is not using the “valid court order” exception.
- Prohibiting incarceration of youth under a certain age (e.g., 15).
- Only allowing incarceration for youth who pose a serious risk to public safety.
- Ensuring that youth who are victims of domestic violence, labor or sex trafficking, or who have committed “survival crimes”<sup>(3)</sup> are diverted from the justice system and receive services and supports instead of being criminalized.
- Requiring that courts, prosecutors, and probation officers use a structured decision-making or other evidence-supported tool that reduces the use of overly restrictive placements.
- Supporting, spreading, or creating diversion programs that serve as alternatives to arrest and court-involvement, as well as opportunities at each point of contact with the juvenile justice/court system for youth to remain in their communities and

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2.) A continuum of care is an array of meaningful non-residential community-based programs, supports, resources and services specifically designed to meet the individual needs of young people and their families to build on their strengths and assets and keep them from committing crimes and entering detention or youth prisons. For more information and a step-by-step guide to creating a continuum, see *Beyond Bars: Keeping Young People Safe at Home and Out of Youth Prisons*.

avoid incarceration.

- Requiring data collection or supporting research efforts to understand how certain marginalized groups of youth (LGBTQ, girls, Native Americans) enter the system that may identify potential discriminatory trends and practices of arrest and incarceration.

## Closing the Back Door

Legislation should ensure youth do not stay in youth prisons unnecessarily by:

- Explicitly forbidding secure detention for non-violent acts and/or decreasing the amount of time youth can be incarcerated for probation violations.
- Shortening length of stay guidelines and reducing the use of unnecessary residential “step-down” programs. Research indicates the longer young people stay in youth prisons, the more harmful the outcome.
- Eliminating fines and/or fees for youth in contact with the justice system, as the inability to pay such fines and fees may add additional time to a youth’s sentence.
- Ensuring youth have quality legal representation post-disposition and at all earlier stages.

Note that some of the above may also be able to be accomplished through regulatory action, but in all cases an **implementation plan and oversight** will be key. Any legislation closing youth prisons should include language on the implementation of the closure, including a committee/task force, composed of key stakeholders, such as youth and families most impacted, to assure appropriate oversight of the development and execution of the implementation plan.

## Direct Action

Campaigns to close youth prisons will likely need to employ a mix of strategies to achieve their goals. One of the more important and most effective is organizing *direct actions*. These are events in which community members take action to effect change. Since direct actions will generally be planned and carried out once your campaign has launched, they are discussed in more detail in Step 12. (Direct actions can also be carried out as part of your campaign launch event, which is discussed in Step 11.)

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3.) Youth living in poverty or homelessness, or who fear for their safety, may be arrested or charged for life-sustaining acts such as sleeping in public spaces or abandoned buildings, or stealing food or money to buy food or shelter.

*Tip:* Many legislative offices are extremely tuned into social media. Take advantage of this by tweeting important media coverage “at” key legislators, tagging them in posts, or using social media to publicly invite them to events or call on them to take action.

## Possible Tactical Strategy: Litigation

Your campaign also may want to work with local civil rights legal groups (e.g., ACLU state chapter) or other groups that focus on juvenile justice and have the capacity to bring a lawsuit to challenge the conditions of confinement. A lawsuit alone will likely not result in youth prison closure, but it can help show why these facilities are so terrible, and it can support your other strategies, e.g., generate media attention, put pressure on the legislative and executive branches. Depending on the federal agency climate at the time, your campaign may also want to file a complaint with the Department of Justice’s Civil Rights Division, which could also lead to, or support, litigation.



"In California, in conjunction with the statewide litigation and legislative work, advocates made sure that county-based stakeholders were informed about conditions in the state-level youth prisons and that judges fully understood and felt empowered to use their authority to remove youth from state prison if expected services were not being provided. Counties acted on this information: some declared a moratorium on sending children to state prison; others sent probation officers to visit all the confined youth from their county."

— *Breaking Down the Walls*

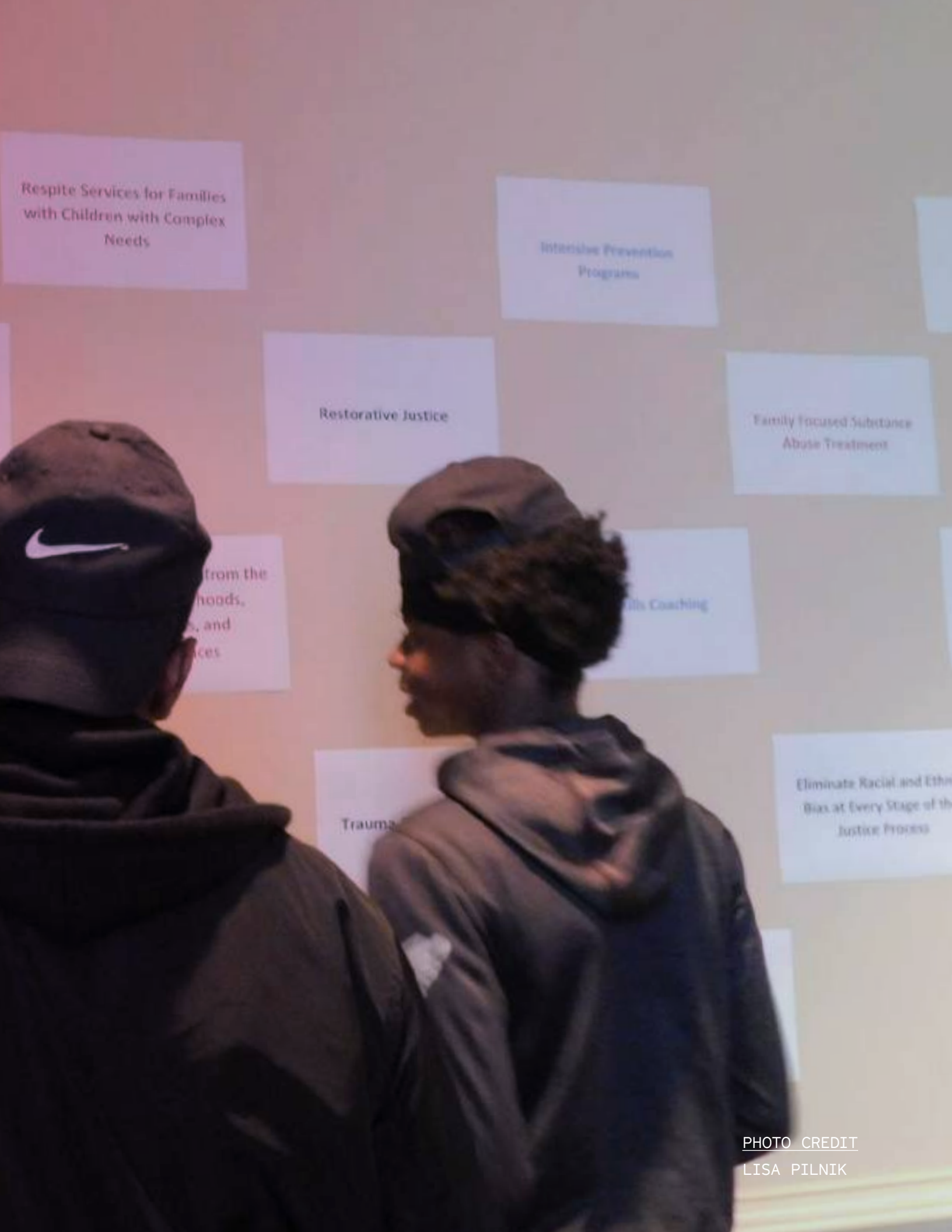
# STEP

# 8.

**Getting the Support You Need:  
Dedicating Resources  
to Your Campaign**

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TIME TO COMPLETE: ONGOING



Respite Services for Families  
with Children with Complex  
Needs

Intensive Prevention  
Programs

Restorative Justice

Family Focused Substance  
Abuse Treatment

from the  
hoods,  
s, and  
ices

Skills Coaching

Trauma

Eliminate Racial and Ethnic  
Bias at Every Stage of the  
Justice Process



Successful campaigns to close youth prisons require passion and persistence, but they also require day-to-day resources, ranging from space to hold meetings to funding for dedicated campaign staff salaries. Your campaign will need to fundraise for some things and rely on volunteered time and donated goods and services (e.g., in-kind donations) for others. Dedicated resources you will need include:

**Staff:** At least 1-2 paid staff (e.g., a Campaign Director and Campaign Organizer) who can devote all of their working time to the day-to-day running of the campaign

**Infrastructure:** Office space, desks, cell phones, laptops, internet access (Wi-Fi for offices, data plans or hot spots for cell phones or laptops)

**Communications Tools:** Website, e-mail, list management services

**Campaign Materials:** Signs for a rally; tee shirts and buttons; reports, including graphic design and printing

**Food:** For campaign meetings and events

**Other:** Transportation to bring campaign volunteers to an event, stipends for youth participants, advertising

### In-kind donations

All of these items will need to be paid for by someone, but the more time, goods, and services you can get donated, the better. Here are some suggestions:

- Look into fellowships that can cover some or all of the salary and benefits for staff.
- Ask local restaurants or coffee shops to donate meeting space and food.
- Ask local service providers, e.g., graphic designers, photographers, printers, web designers to donate their services or offer a discount. Also consider students in these fields, who may need to build a portfolio.
- Ask law firms to provide pro bono support to write fact sheets and policy reports. If you don't have existing relationships, ask your local or state bar association for a referral.
- See if your local high school requires students to complete public service hours, and if you have tasks that could qualify.

*Tip:* **Invest in Training.** If your campaign has the resources, consider sending one or more members to a training on campaign organizing, strategy, and effectiveness, given by Wellstone Action, Midwest Academy, or another respected social justice training organization.

## Build a budget

Before you can raise the funds you need for your campaign, you'll need to determine how much you need and what you'll need it for. Start by developing a list of items you'll need during the pre-launch phase of your campaign and the launch event itself. Then determine what you'll likely be able to generate in-kind donations for. Estimate (or guesstimate) and add up all of the costs for the remaining items, and that's your initial fundraising goal. Then determine the additional costs for everything you'll need for the remainder of the campaign (excluding those you can get donated) and that's your ultimate goal.

## Raising funds for your campaign

There will inevitably be some needs you cannot meet through in-kind donations, and having financial resources will allow you flexibility to meet needs and grasp opportunities as they arise. You'll want to form a fundraising committee of supporters who have time and interest in helping you solicit donations, host fundraising events, and/or write grant applications.

*Tip:* Foundations can be a source of major support for your campaign, and they are often able to contribute at a level that you may not reach with individual donations (e.g., enough to fund one or more full-time staff over a year or more.) But it can take time to build relationships with foundations and to apply for and receive funding. Many foundations only make grants once per year or quarterly, although some do fund on a rolling basis. You should start researching and connecting with local community foundations, statewide foundations that fund justice issues, corporate foundations, or funder associations as soon as possible, and certainly invite them to participate in any launch activities or direct actions you are planning.

*Tip:* There are many different ways to generate financial support for your campaign. You can:

- Hold a fundraising event or encourage individuals to donate at campaign events and trainings.
- Ask community groups to sponsor an event or action with financial support or to give a donation.
- Ask a local business to sponsor an event with financial support or to give a donation.
- Apply to a local foundation for a grant to underwrite campaign activities or for general campaign support.

# STEP

# 9. ■

**Messaging and Communications:**  
Harnessing the Power  
of Public Opinion and Media

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TIME TO COMPLETE: ONGOING

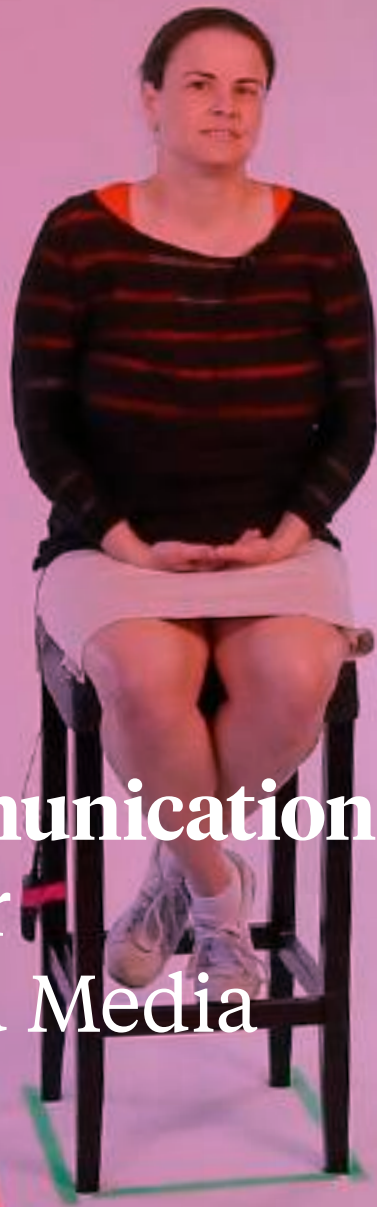






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AMANDA MAGLIONE

Before publicly announcing your campaign, your core leaders and supporters will want to develop your key campaign messaging. Questions to consider include:

- Who are your audiences?
- What’s your main message?
- How can you effectively convey your message in a brief campaign name and tagline?

The essential pieces you need to have ready to use at your campaign’s launch are your campaign **name**, **tagline**, and **logo** (collectively these are your “brand” or identity). You’ll also want to have prepared:

- An overall campaign message that answers the question, “What do you want?” (e.g., *Prison is no place for our state’s youth*).
- The top three messages for your campaign that answer the question “Why”? (e.g., *It isn’t safe. It isn’t fair. It doesn’t work.*)
- A message that answers the “Who” part of your campaign? (e.g., *We are a coalition of youth, families, advocates, and allies who have joined together to ensure that our state shifts its priorities from incarcerating youth to serving youth in the community.*)

Here are some examples from current and past campaigns to close youth prisons:



Once you have the basics in place and have garnered some additional resources, your campaign should create these other communication vehicles:

- A website
- Social media accounts (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram)
- Campaign one-pager/flyer
- A dissemination plan
- A media outreach plan

Your campaign should set targets for communicating regularly with those outside your inner circle. For example, sending announcements/updates to a campaign e-mail list twice per month or posting to social media once per day. Additional communications strategies, including tips for effective communications with your campaign leadership and core supporters, are shared in later sections of this guide. Tag or tweet “at” key influencers to get your campaign and asks on their radar.

*Tip:* Social media toolkits are a great way to make it easy for your campaign supporters to spread the word. Choose a day or week to ask your allies to take action on social media, and provide them with some or all of the following: Hashtags, sample posts or tweets, resources/websites to link to, memes or other graphics. Make sure to keep in mind the different platforms people may use (e.g., Twitter limits the length of posts, Instagram posts must have an image and can be captioned but links will not work in captions).

## Media and communications advocacy

Newspapers, radio and television news, and other forms of media can help you reach individuals who may be persuaded to support your goals but who are not already in your social networks. Having your issue covered by an impartial journalist also gives it more credibility. Your campaign launch will be your first major engagement with the media. Here are the key tasks that you will want to do leading up to that event:

- ***Bring in expert assistance:*** See if a local communications/public relations firm would be willing to donate their time to help, or if organizations in your coalition have communications staff who could support your efforts.
- ***Build a list:*** You’ll need to collect names and contact information for the relevant reporters at your local media outlets. Your campaign partners may already have these lists; if not, this is a great task to have volunteers help with.



- **Write a release:** A media advisory or press release will give reporters the relevant information before your big event, and it lets you tell the story of your launch immediately afterwards in your own words. Make sure to include pictures, as well as quotes from your campaign leadership and from impacted youth and families. Most importantly, include contact information for press to reach someone on your team—a cell phone number and e-mail address—as well as information on how the public can get more involved (e.g., your website or Facebook page).
- **Be ready:** Have fact sheets, papers, or reports with all of the information gathered in Step 1 ready to go, and release them shortly before your launch, or at the same time. Work with young people who have experienced incarceration and are willing to share their stories, so that they are prepared to safely discuss their experiences with the media.
- **Follow up:** Collect all of the media coverage you receive about your launch and share it with your supporters and targets (e.g., key legislators).

*Tip:* Social media is an important way to get the word out about your campaign launch, and it may also lead to media attention, as reporters frequently use social media to generate story ideas or find expert sources.

Here are some additional ideas to help you get media coverage for your campaign:

- Start a Storybank with stories of directly impacted youth and their families
- Put together a spokespersons bureau with directly impacted youth
- Create a media action team to promote social media and provide rapid response to press
- Meet with reporters and editorial boards
- Add questions to existing surveys and polls to gauge community support
- Invite media to direct actions and to cover legislative and policy events and actions
- Write and place letters to the editor and op-eds

*Tip:* If your campaign has members/allies who are willing to share their personal experiences with youth prisons, support those individuals as much as possible with media training, “strategic sharing” education, and the space to engage in self-care to avoid re-traumatization. Ensure that their sharing has maximum impact by linking it to an ask or to common themes that will support your campaign (e.g., missed opportunities).

**Next Page:** Sample Campaign Launch Press Release, Courtesy Youth Justice Milwaukee »

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** MARCH 22, 2017

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## **Advocates Officially Launch Youth Justice Milwaukee, a Campaign to Close Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake Youth Prisons**

**MILWAUKEE** – A coalition of community organizations, youth advocates and family members of youth involved in the juvenile justice system today officially launched Youth Justice Milwaukee (YJM), a broad-based alliance leading the fight to close Wisconsin's dangerous and outdated youth prisons. YJM hopes to replace the prisons with community-based, family-centered, restorative programs that are proven to work better and cost taxpayers less money.

Overwhelming evidence shows that youth prisons are harmful, ineffective and excessively expensive, and a vast majority of Milwaukeeans agree. New poll data released today confirms that two-thirds of adults in Milwaukee County—of all political stripes—support shifting the focus of the juvenile justice system from incarceration to prevention and rehabilitation. YJM's coalition of advocates will fight to translate this public support into expanded alternative treatment options in Milwaukee County that give youth the opportunity to repair harm to victims and communities, such as intensive rehabilitation, education, job training, and community service.

"Our current system relies too heavily on locking up our youth, which seriously damages their chances at recovery and future success," **said Youth Justice Milwaukee's Sharlen Moore.** "Far too often, young people leave Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake worse off than when they came in. There are better approaches, and we are dedicated to making alternatives available here in Milwaukee County and across the state so our young people, families, and communities have the chance to recover and thrive."

Youth in prison are routinely subjected to maltreatment which can exacerbate trauma, limit learning, and lead to future recidivism. The rampant abuses at Lincoln Hills School for Boys and Copper Lake School for Girls have been widely documented, as they remain under investigation by the FBI. In recent months, allegations of sexual assault, use of pepper spray, strangulation and suffocation of youth, as well as destruction of public records, have renewed calls for the closure of these outdated, inhumane facilities. Earlier this year, the ACLU of Wisconsin and the Juvenile Law Center sued state officials on behalf of four teenagers, for cruel and unusual punishment at these facilities.

"There is mounting evidence that our youth justice system must be reformed," **added Youth Justice Milwaukee's Jeff Roman.** "However, the proposal to build a new youth prison in Milwaukee County is a huge step backward because it doubles down on a failed system and would be a waste of taxpayer dollars. That's why we're committed to community-based solutions that work better while saving money." The new poll confirms widespread public support for alternative approaches that keep youth out of prison, finding that:

- \* 90% support designing treatment and rehabilitation plans that include a youth's family in planning and services.
- \* 83% support providing financial incentives for states and municipalities to invest in alternatives to youth incarceration, such as intensive rehabilitation, education, job training, community services, and programs that provide youth the opportunity to repair harm to victims and communities.
- \* 73% support requiring states to reduce racial and ethnic disparities in the youth justice system.
- \* 69% support increased funding to provide more public defenders who represent children in court.

The full poll results are available [here](#). Prior to their official launch, YJM also released a list of recommendations for transforming Milwaukee's broken juvenile justice system which can be found [here](#).

###

*Youth Justice Milwaukee is a broad-based campaign advocating for community-based, family-centered, restorative programs as an alternative to locking up children in Wisconsin's youth prisons. Youth Justice Milwaukee represents a coalition of persons who were incarcerated as youth, families of youth who are or were incarcerated, service providers, and local and national youth justice advocates.*

"New York's Empty Beds, Wasted Dollars  
campaign pushed a specific, targeted  
media message: that the upstate facilities  
were nearly empty and the state was  
squandering millions of dollars to keep  
these facilities open. The campaign also  
wanted to expose the vested interests that  
were pushing to keep the facilities open,  
particularly the legislators representing  
the districts where the facilities were  
located. One tactic that the campaign  
used to raise public attention to this  
was to take out ads in the local papers  
targeting specific legislators who were  
opposed to facility closure. The advocates



also reached out to editorial boards and columnists in all the major media markets in New York State. To expose the waste of the current system, campaign members worked with the Office of Children and Family Services to bring TV news cameras into the near empty facilities, which the unions and some upstate facilities were fighting to keep open. System stakeholders, including judges, were allowed to tour the prisons so that they could witness firsthand the damage prisons cause to the children they ordered to be held behind bars."

— *Breaking Down the Walls*

# STEP 10.

**Securing the Nuts and Bolts:**  
Ensuring You Have the Necessary  
Staff and Infrastructure

---

TIME TO COMPLETE: ONGOING





PHOTO CREDIT  
AMANDA MAGLIONE



# Creating Infrastructure

Your campaign may not be able to raise enough money to hire staff until after it gains some visibility and traction, so you may need to launch your campaign solely relying on volunteers and small donations. Ultimately, however, your goal should be to use the visibility from the campaign launch to generate broader interest and support, including private funding that would allow you to hire full-time staff. Having a base of operations, full-time paid staff, and other “infrastructure” will allow you to take your campaign to the next level and achieve your goals. Even if you are not able to hire paid staff and rent or purchase infrastructure for your campaign prior to launch, these components should still be part of your planning process.

## Staff

Although volunteers will power most of your campaign, it is important to have at least one or two people who are paid to focus on your campaign, rather than helping as they can around other professional and personal commitments. Roles you may wish to hire for include:

- Campaign Director
- Campaign Organizer
- Policy/Legislative Advocate
- Communications Coordinator

These job descriptions can be posted on job websites, and you also can ask your campaign members and any local/state youth advocacy groups to share it with their networks.

Your campaign leadership, including directly impacted youth, should help with refining the job description and interviewing/selecting candidates.

*Tip:* If your campaign has already started establishing a social media presence, posting job descriptions on Facebook, Twitter, etc., is a great way to find candidates and let supporters know that your campaign is growing.

Organizational partners who are part of your campaign may be willing to commit some of their staff’s time to take on these tasks. To ensure that you will have the necessary resources to accomplish your goals, and to prevent confusion down the road, ensure that everyone is on the same page about these commitments by agreeing to a written description of roles, tasks, and time (e.g., A.K. will serve as Communications Coordinator for the Campaign at 40% FTE (Full Time Equivalent), per the position job description, with X Organization paying her full salary and benefits).

## Office/meeting space and equipment

At the very least, your campaign will need to have a physical address for mail delivery, but ideally you also will be able to secure dedicated office space for your staff as well as access to larger areas for meetings, materials prep, etc. Ask if any of the organizations that are part of your campaign are willing to donate these as part of their support for the campaign. If not, contact local nonprofit/community organizations to see if they have a spare office to rent inexpensively. Other facilities that may offer free or low-cost meeting or work space include:

- Public Libraries
- Churches/Places of Worship
- Schools/Universities
- Youth/Recreation Centers
- Civic or Community Centers

If there are local businesses or law firms that are already providing you with in-kind support, consider asking them for meeting/work space as well. In choosing a location for meetings, consider accessibility for campaign volunteers who may not have access to private transportation.

The office equipment you'll need to secure, through in-kind donations or purchase, will include:

- Desk(s)
- Landline phone(s)
- Cell Phones with e-mail/web access for staff
- Laptops
- Business cards
- Printer/copier (or regular/reliable access to one)

If you cannot have these items donated, find out if any of your supporter organizations have a bulk/business purchasing discount you can use, or take advantage of low-cost providers such as Vistaprint. Note that you may be able to avoid paying sales tax on these items if you (or your fiscal sponsor) are a tax-exempt 501(c)3 organization and/or state-recognized nonprofit organization. You will need to show a copy of the relevant paperwork.

*Tip:* Once you have your campaign team on board, there are many free/low-cost and useful tools that will help you communicate and work together more effectively, such as:

- Google Calendar for scheduling meetings
- Freeconferencecall.com for group calls
- Gotomeeting for webinars
- Skype, Google Hangouts, or Gotomeeting for video calls
- Google Groups or Yahoo Groups for listservs (group e-mail lists)
- Google Docs or Dropbox for sharing/editing documents

## Essential Strategy: Engaging Volunteers and Other Supporters

To build your campaign, you will need a strong network of volunteers and supporters across your state to manage, strengthen, and expand your efforts. For the purposes of this guide, supporters are individuals who believe in your campaign and are willing to donate funds or take limited action (e.g., sign a petition, attend an event). Volunteers are individuals who are willing to make a more intensive time commitment (lead or participate in a committee, plan or staff events).

### **The role of volunteers**

Once you have hired paid staff according to your needs and resources, you will need to build a strong team of volunteers to complete all of the other work of your campaign. These dedicated individuals will be the backbone of your campaign. You will need to clearly articulate the campaign “roles” that you are looking for volunteers to fulfill and specify how these interact with your paid staff positions (e.g., will one staff member supervise all volunteers or will volunteers work with different staff according to their role?). Examples of campaign roles often filled by committed volunteers include: Outreach Coordinator, Media Assistant, Social Media Coordinator, Direct Action Coordinator, and Phonebank Captain. Here are some tips for filling these positions:

- Put together an outreach flyer inviting volunteers to join your campaign.
- Host an initial volunteer orientation session to provide basic information on the campaign, answer questions, and invite volunteers to sign up for various roles.
- Create a “job description” for each role, including the number of hours per week you’d like your volunteers to support the campaign, the qualities you are looking for in a volunteer, and some background on your campaign goals.



- Advertise these campaign roles on your website, social media, community listservs, and websites like Idealist.org and VolunteerMatch.
- Once you have a core group of volunteers, work with these volunteers to host regular volunteer orientation sessions (e.g., once a week or every other week) so that new volunteers can continually join the campaign.
- “Promote” volunteers by changing titles and increasing responsibilities as they become more experienced and ready to take on more ownership of campaign work.
- Make special efforts to recruit youth volunteers by holding recruitment events and advertising positions at schools, youth centers, etc.

*Tip:* Campaign volunteers who feel that they are making a real contribution to the effort will stick around and see the campaign through. Be sure to create space to hear their ideas and feedback. Give them choices in how they might contribute to the campaign, and be flexible in creating new opportunities for them to contribute.

Remember that volunteers may not come to you with all of the tools and skills to carry out all of the tasks needed in the campaign. Build in regular training sessions on key tasks. Be sure that every volunteer has a go-to person on the campaign whom they can consult with and get feedback from. Volunteers will need more support at the beginning of their time with the campaign and when roles change. More seasoned volunteers can be tasked with recruiting and managing other volunteers.

*Tip:* It is very important to recognize and thank your campaign volunteers for their contributions. Praise them at campaign meetings and in your newsletter. When you’ve accomplished a major campaign goal or benchmark, consider hosting a volunteer recognition event.

# Outreach to other organizations

Other organizations can be valuable members of your coalition, and their supporters/constituents may be interested in supporting your work as well. Here are some types of organizations you should try to connect to. For more information and help locating local organizations of each type, visit [www.youthfirstinitiative.org](http://www.youthfirstinitiative.org).

*Statewide organizations*

*Regional & local organizations*

*Grassroots groups*

*Community organizations serving communities most impacted by incarceration*

*Children's advocacy groups*

*Civil rights/racial justice organizations*

*Anti-poverty/economic justice advocates*

*Human rights groups*

*Disability rights advocates*

*School/education improvement/rights groups (including those working to fight the school-to-prison pipeline, and higher education institutions and groups)*

*Higher education organizations (community colleges, universities)*

*Legal community (e.g., public defenders)*

*LGBTQ+ groups*

*Mental and physical health professional and advocacy groups*

*Parent and family groups (particularly those for parents whose children are/have been incarcerated)*

*Student/youth groups (particularly groups for currently or formerly incarcerated youth), youth service providers*

*Arts groups*

*Faith groups*

*Restorative justice organizations*

*Job training organizations*

*Social workers*

*Volunteer groups*

## Building your supporter base

In addition to targeted recruitment of volunteers who can devote significant amounts of time to your campaign, you should, throughout your campaign, devote time and energy to building support in the community and among key stakeholders. Some of these activities will have the additional value of leading to interested individuals volunteering for the campaign. Some methods to consider include:

- Outreach workshops for youth and families
- One-on-one meetings with community leaders or other individuals who express interest in your campaign
- Leadership training for impacted youth and families

*Tip:* Different types of people will come to this work from different places—some may be personally affected or motivated by their faith, others may connect to you because they see the impact on their community or business (e.g., schools who are losing students to mass incarceration or government officials who realize that their community does not have the workers they need.)

*Tip:* Public statements and community actions also can spur ideas for contacts with key targets or influencers—for example, a local company that has expressed concerns about a shortage of qualified workers may be interested in supporting the campaign based on the fact that youth prisons—and the damage they cause to young lives—are depriving them of their future workforce.

## Partnering with youth in your campaign

Young people will bring energy, enthusiasm, and creativity to your campaign. Those who have been personally impacted by incarceration also will bring the insights and first-hand knowledge of their lived experiences. Partnering with youth—and providing them with education, training, and leadership development—will allow them to contribute to your campaign and have an impact on their own communities. Youth partnerships are also an important sustainability strategy—long after your campaign successfully closes your state's youth prison you will have a pipeline of committed leaders who remember how and why they were closed and can fight backsliding as leadership and political climates change. Here are some strategies for recruiting youth and keeping them engaged.

- Go to places where young people already are (schools, youth programs) to talk about your campaign.



- Hold meetings at times and places that are accessible for youth, and provide food and transportation assistance.
- For youth who are contributing substantial amounts of time, provide monetary stipends.
- Offer leadership development and skill-building training in areas such as public speaking, working with media, and organizing, as well as education on substantive areas like the juvenile justice system and youth rights.
- Let youth know how much you appreciate their everyday efforts, and celebrate small wins and major accomplishments.

"My advice to adults starting campaigns is to involve young people in the system. Young people know other young people who are in the system and can bring them in to the campaign."

— **Andre Holder,**  
*in **Breaking Down the Walls***

### **Staying in touch with your campaign network**

As you continue to build your network of campaign volunteers and supporters, there are many tools you can use to keep people connected and engaged:

- Social media platforms (e.g., Twitter, Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram) and cross-network management tools (e.g., Hootsuite)
- Listservs (e.g., Google Groups, Yahoo Groups)
- Newsletter and e-mail/contact lists (e.g., MailChimp, Constant Contact)
- Websites, blogs (e.g., Wordpress, Wix.com)

"The initial meetings were during the day downtown, primarily with people participating as part of jobs. When we involved young people and families, we had to change meetings to the evenings in a community location, and the nature of meetings shifted. They were more interactive. People did check ins. There was small group work. The meetings became more fun even though they were about a serious topic. When you have to create a meeting for a young person to be interested in, oftentimes it becomes a more interesting meeting for adults at the table too."

— Amoretta Morris,  
*in Breaking Down the Walls*

## Ways to build awareness about, and engagement in, your campaign

Youth Justice Action Month (YJAM) in October and the Week of Action Against Incarcerating Youth in May are two great opportunities to shine public attention on your campaign and recruit supporters and volunteers. Strategies to use, tied to these events or others, include the following:

***Set an outreach goal/time period*** (e.g., 100 new campaign supporters added during October/YJAM). Contact members of your network and ask them to help spread the word to their contacts to help grow your contact list. Host a “phonebank” night and/or write a short outreach email and ask your network to email it to their contacts.

***“Table” at conferences, festivals, and other community events.*** Ask your current network to help by contacting event organizers and hosting an information table at the event. In addition to your signup sheet, campaign flyer, and other brief materials, try to bring some candy to draw people in. If you have time, make a display board with pictures and other eye-catching information.

***Meet with reporters:*** Reporters may respond more quickly to information tied to an event like YJAM or the Week of Action. Issue a media advisory and/or reach out to request small group meetings with reporters at their offices. This added visibility may draw in additional supporters to your campaign.

***Write about your campaign:*** Nonprofit organizations and weekly newspapers are always looking for content for their printed publications, e-newsletters, blogs. This is a terrific avenue for spreading the word about your campaign. Write a short piece (200-500) words about your campaign that spells out what you are working to change and how others can get involved. Ask allied organizations to put this in their newsletters and blogs in advance of YJAM, the National Week of Action, or other key event. Reach out to weekly newspapers in your area and ask them to run the article. Provide a picture that includes community members and/or an eye-catching infographic.

***Create a bookstore/library display:*** Talk to libraries and local bookstores to see if they would host a display of books about youth in the justice system and information about your campaign. Ask if they will let you discuss youth justice issues with their readers at a book discussion or other type of event.

***Call on faith leaders:*** Ask your community’s faith leaders to talk about this issue with their congregations tied to your key event. Offer to meet with their youth group or to be available to talk to constituents after services. Provide key facts on youth in the justice system for faith leaders to use in their services, prayer sessions, or in newsletters.

***Host an open house:*** Too busy to organize a big event? Consider hosting an “open house” at your campaign and asking members of your network to each bring a friend. This is an informal and low-key way to bring new allies to join your campaign efforts.



For all of these strategies, make sure you *include information on how to get involved with your campaign*, and try to *collect contact information* from those who might be interested in supporting your work. When gathering supporters, highlight the fact that there are many ways to engage with the campaign, from spending one minute participating in a social media campaign (e.g., Tweetstorm or Thunderclap) to holding a volunteer position that involves several hours of work per week.

## Individual engagement

Connecting with people one-on-one will be an important way to gain campaign volunteers and supporters, particularly in the early stages of your campaign. During initial conversations, consider asking the following:

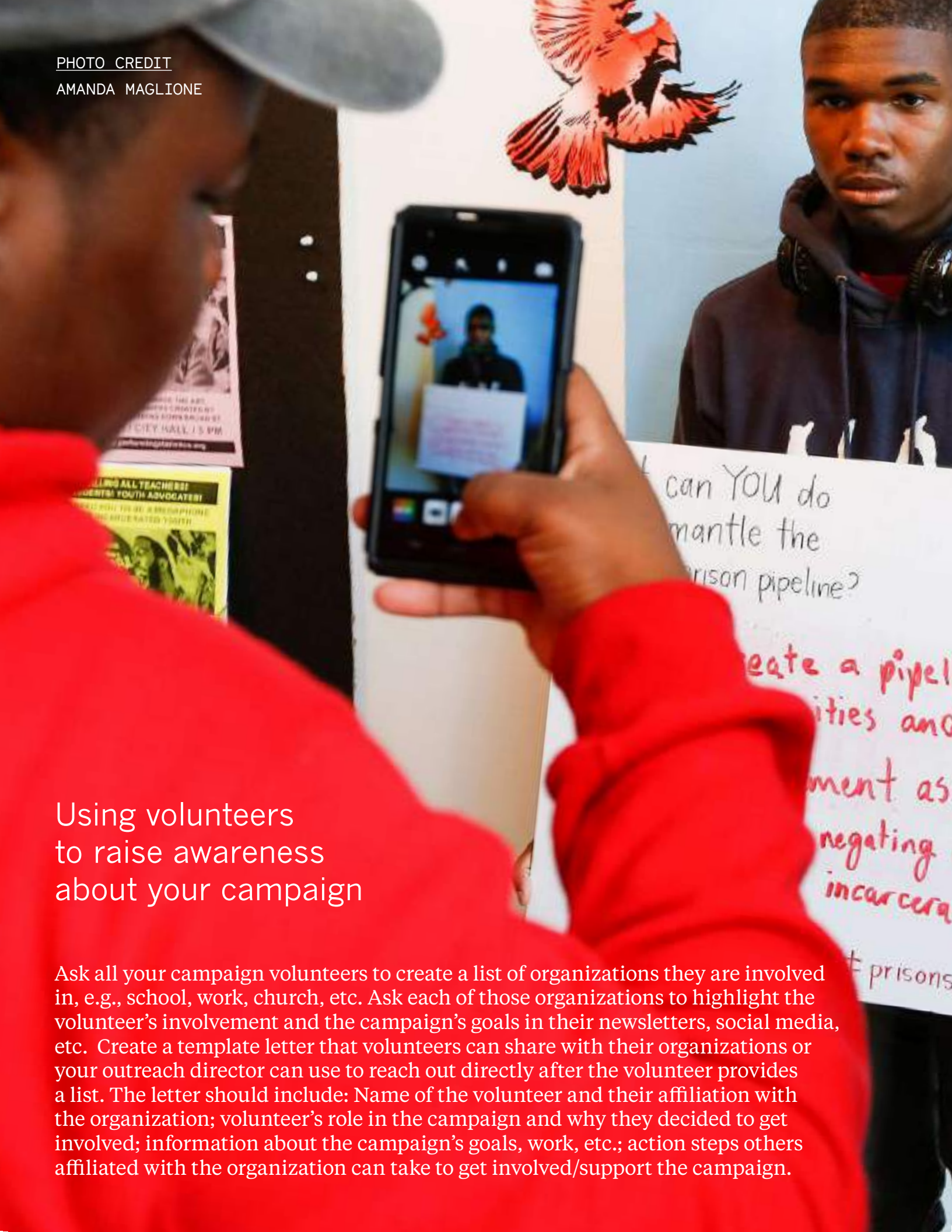
- Why are you interested in this issue? (e.g., Has someone in their family been in the juvenile justice system?)
- What would you like to see happen? (e.g., Would they be interested in establishing a network of people who have been affected by this issue to share information and support each other? Would they like to see increased access and visitation hours for families to see their children in juvenile prisons or changes in your state's law on incarcerating children?)
- Would you like to be part of a campaign? What kinds of collective actions would you be most interested in?
- What would you like to do to make a contribution? (e.g., Would they like to host gatherings, make outreach calls, write up personal stories, contact media, call state and local officials, or write letters and fact sheets?)

As your campaign grows, you will need to rely more heavily on e-mail lists and other less personal methods of communication, but as your time allows, look for opportunities to continue to make individual connections, such as a personal note asking someone to attend an event or a phone call after an event asking for feedback.

PHOTO CREDIT  
AMANDA MAGLIONE

## Using volunteers to raise awareness about your campaign

Ask all your campaign volunteers to create a list of organizations they are involved in, e.g., school, work, church, etc. Ask each of those organizations to highlight the volunteer's involvement and the campaign's goals in their newsletters, social media, etc. Create a template letter that volunteers can share with their organizations or your outreach director can use to reach out directly after the volunteer provides a list. The letter should include: Name of the volunteer and their affiliation with the organization; volunteer's role in the campaign and why they decided to get involved; information about the campaign's goals, work, etc.; action steps others affiliated with the organization can take to get involved/support the campaign.



"We created colorful flyers for various meeting topics. We would flyer at the Metro (subway) and outside of school. We would go to various neighborhood and community meetings where we thought people who are interested in these meetings would be present. We flyered at libraries. In sum, there was a lot of outreach to get the word out about organization, about the work, and about the things we were talking about. The important part about this work was that it wasn't just about being able to build membership but also was about building political consciousness and awareness."

— Amoretta Morris,  
in *Breaking Down the Walls*



# Campaign Inventory Worksheet

This worksheet can help you track and ensure you have the elements you need to undertake your campaign.

## 1.) Independent Structure/Entity

**The campaign is an independent structure or entity with a governance structure such as a Steering Committee that is diverse in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, geography (i.e., statewide constituencies) and includes youth and families who directly impacted and individuals from the most impacted communities.**

**Our Steering Committee includes these individuals:**

**Mission. Our campaign mission is:**

## 2.) Campaign Plan

\_\_\_\_\_ **Annual group process to create/update the plan.**

**We met on \_\_\_\_\_ to create our campaign plan.**

**Our next plan will be updated on: \_\_\_\_\_**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Midwest Academy Chart. Our campaign plan is attached.**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Timeline. Our timeline is attached.**

## 3.) Dedicated and Trained Campaign Staff

\_\_\_\_\_ **Full-time Campaign Director.**

**Our Campaign Director is: \_\_\_\_\_**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Full-time Campaign Organizer(s).**

**Our Campaign Organizer(s) is/are: \_\_\_\_\_**



## 4.) Community Organizing Approach

\_\_\_\_\_ **An organizing plan that includes an intentional focus on engaging impacted communities, particularly young people and families involved in the juvenile justice system. Our organizing plan is attached.**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Annual leadership training for youth and/or families. We held our annual leadership training on \_\_\_\_\_ . Our next leadership training will be held on \_\_\_\_\_ .**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Directly impacted youth are represented on the Steering Committee. The youth are: \_\_\_\_\_**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Directly impacted parents/families are represented on the Steering Committee. The parents /families are: \_\_\_\_\_**

## 5.) Communications

\_\_\_\_\_ **Campaign brand name and tagline.**

**Our campaign brand name is: \_\_\_\_\_**

**Our campaign tagline is: \_\_\_\_\_**



\_\_\_\_\_ **Campaign logo. Our logo is attached.**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Steering Committee listserv**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Campaign email list**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Regular communications to campaign email list (e.g., 2 x month)**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Website**

**Our campaign website is:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ **1 x day posts on social media: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, etc.**

**Campaign staff who are responsible for social media are:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ **Regular campaign staff meetings (e.g., 1 x week)**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Regular campaign steering committee meetings (e.g., 2 x month)**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Regular campaign coalition meetings (e.g., monthly or quarterly)**

\_\_\_\_\_ **2 x media activities per month (e.g. press release, op-ed, event)**

**Campaign staff who are responsible for media outreach are:** \_\_\_\_\_



# STEP 11.

A woman in a white t-shirt and a patterned scarf holds a large megaphone. She is smiling and looking towards the camera. In front of her are two young children, a girl and a boy, both wearing white t-shirts. The girl's shirt has a graphic of a hand pointing and the text "There's not a better YOU". The boy's shirt has the word "UNITY" visible. In the background, a black banner is partially visible with white text that reads "COST TO INCARCERATE ONE FOR C...R: \$136...". The scene is outdoors at night, with warm orange and yellow lights from street lamps or other sources illuminating the background.

**Letting the World Know:  
Planning and Executing  
Your Campaign Launch**

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TIME TO COMPLETE: 1 MONTH MINIMUM, LIKELY 3 MONTHS





PHOTO CREDIT  
ART 180



Youth decarceration is a bold goal. Achieving this goal impacts your entire community and cannot be accomplished “behind the scenes.” You will likely want to do some of your planning and information gathering out of the public eye, but once you have completed the other steps outlined in this Toolkit and your campaign is ready to go, you will want a highly visible launch.

A successful launch will demonstrate strong support and put pressure on your targets. The launch will allow you to raise awareness and generate additional support for your campaign. It also will bring your opposition out of the woodwork, which should be accounted for in your planning.

*Tip:* Having a highly visible public campaign launch offers community members an opportunity to take action to end youth incarceration. It also puts policymakers on notice that there are people who want change, and it lets the media know that there is a community resource on this issue.

You should develop a plan for your launch similar to your campaign plan, with tasks, timelines and responsible parties. You will need to decide **when** and **where** to launch, as well as **who** should be involved.

**When** the campaign will launch will be determined largely by your overall campaign plan and timing, but avoid major holidays. Try to hold the event mid-week (Tuesday through Thursday) and in the late morning (e.g., 10 am - 12 noon) to increase media participation. Also, factor in the timing of your legislative session and any key legislative or executive branch elections or events.

*Tip:* Leave extra time in your planning process to allow for any changes or issues that arise, and make sure to factor holidays and key dates into your planning for all of the steps leading up to the launch, not just the launch itself.

**Where** you hold the event can signal the tone of your campaign going forward and should reflect your value/principle statement and theory of change. Locations and types of events could include:

- A press conference in front of a youth prison to illustrate what the problem is
- A rally at the state capitol to demonstrate who should fix the problem
- A tour of a community-based alternative to incarceration to show what we should be investing in instead of incarcerating youth

*Tip:* To ensure your event is well-attended, ask partner organizations around the state to organize buses or caravans of supporters to attend.

**Who** will participate will vary depending on the strategies you've decided on, but it should include directly impacted youth and their families. Other individuals and groups could include community-based organizations, faith leaders, youth service providers, and juvenile justice system stakeholders. Look back at the power map you created for other individuals who could be invited to attend or participate.

*Tip:* Consider whether you want to have organizations or key individuals (e.g., legislators) sign on to the campaign—or a letter supporting its goals—in advance, to be shared at the event.

## Launch of Wisconsin and New Jersey Prison Closure Campaigns

On March 22, 2017, *Youth Justice Milwaukee*, a campaign to close Wisconsin's Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake Youth Prisons, launched with an event at the Wisconsin Black Historical Society Museum. Speakers included YJM's leadership, national experts on youth incarceration and community-based alternatives, and a young man who was incarcerated in Wisconsin; there was also a roundtable with policymakers. Participants learned about an ACLU of Wisconsin lawsuit challenging the conditions at the prisons and engaged in a community visioning session. The event generated community support, as well as press coverage, which included information on how others could get involved.

On June 28, 2017, advocates in New Jersey launched their campaign to close Jamesburg and Hayes prisons with hundreds of people rallying in front of Jamesburg on the youth prison's 150th anniversary, tied to the theme "150 years in enough!" Media accounts of the event highlighted the racial inequities and high costs of New Jersey's juvenile prisons and noted that the campaign was led by the New Jersey Institute for Social Justice, with support from more than 40 other organizations.

# STEP

# 12.

**Thinking Ahead:**  
Planning for Success  
Post-Launch

---

TIME TO COMPLETE: ONGOING



Town Hall / Community Event +  
Reentry Task Force " (Phil)

- List Serve
- Social Media

ing Work " (Vanessa)

Screening  
w/groups

at where the people are

This Toolkit is intended to help you prepare for and launch your campaign to close the youth prison(s) in your state; it does not address the day-to-day work of carrying out your campaign once it has started. There are some activities you will want to undertake during the pre-launch phase, however, that will position you for success during the active phase of your campaign. This includes understanding and planning for direct actions, documentation, and thinking about how you will ensure successful implementation once your campaign is successful.

## Essential Strategy: Direct Action

As discussed earlier, *direct actions* are events in which community members take action to effect change, and they will be a major way that your campaign achieves its goals. Direct actions can range from signing an online petition or participating in a coordinated social media push to holding a mass protest rally in front of a youth prison. The Midwest Academy's *Organizing for Social Change* explains that in direct actions, "the people directly affected by the problem take action to solve it." It notes that, out of all of the possible forms of community organizing, direct action is most concerned with challenging existing power relationships.

Even though you won't be carrying out direct actions as part of your campaign planning, the work you are doing now will dictate the direct actions you build into your campaign and organizing plans. For example, your power mapping activity will inform which strategies might increase your campaign allies' power (or help them realize their own power) or threaten the power of your opponents. You also may wish to include a direct action as part of your campaign launch (e.g., a rally or a petition).

Direct actions give your campaign supporters a chance to make their voices heard, call public attention to an issue, and put pressure on public decision-makers to make changes. Direct actions should be creative but also clearly related to the problems you are fighting and/or your proposed solution. Here are some examples of direct actions successfully used by other campaigns to close youth prisons, from the Youth First Initiative publication *Breaking Down the Walls*:

- In Louisiana, Families and Friends of Louisiana's Incarcerated Children held a New Orleans Jazz Funeral during which protestors mourned the lost freedom, dreams, and futures of their imprisoned youth.
- Youth from New York City's Make the Road's Youth Power Project were fighting the expansion of youth prisons. They spent their spring break showing up at the Mayor's public events, asking him why he was spending \$65 million on 200 new youth detention beds. When he finally tried to answer, they recorded his fumbling response, and then used that video in their other campaign efforts.

- Community organizers in Mississippi who were working to close the Columbia Training School arranged for young people to play at a blues festival. In between sets, youth campaign members read letters from the girls at Columbia describing the physical and sexual abuse they experienced. The organizers asked the audience to sign petitions and to write letters to the girls at Columbia so they would know they were not forgotten.
- 18 years after the *Jerry M* lawsuit called attention to the deplorable conditions at the District of Columbia’s Oak Hill Youth Center, conditions were still terrible. The Justice for D.C. Youth Coalition held “Unhappy *Jerry M* Birthday” events to call attention to the lack of progress and to support their campaign to close Oak Hill permanently.

*Tip:* Although direct action organizing is a distinct strategy within your campaign, it also can support the other campaign strategies. For example, your legislative strategies can be bolstered by a “call-in campaign” where constituents phone their representatives to support (or oppose) a bill.

Some commonly used direct actions that can support campaigns to close youth prisons include:

- Action alerts
- Call-in days
- Petitions
- Coordinated social media action, e.g., Tweetstorms, Thunderclaps
- Events/rallies
- Educational forums
- Legislative action days (visits)
- Postcards

For sample materials and other ideas, please visit [www.youthfirstinitiative.org](http://www.youthfirstinitiative.org).

*Tip:* Websites like [www.change.org](http://www.change.org) and [www.colorofchange.org](http://www.colorofchange.org) can be platforms for your own direct actions, and they also highlight direct actions from other types of social justice campaigns, which may spur ideas for your own work.



## Essential Strategy: Documenting Your Campaign

As you start to plan your campaign, begin documenting your work and cataloging the actions you've undertaken, the people involved, and your successes and challenges. When you are ready to recount the story of your campaign's successes, as well as the challenges you've faced in doing this work, it will be much easier if you have documented your work all the way along. It is also crucial for fundraising purposes. And you will help to grow the movement by sharing the steps you undertook and your campaign's major accomplishments. More information on documenting and evaluating your campaign is available at [www.youthfirstinitiative.org](http://www.youthfirstinitiative.org).

*Tip:* Build documentation into every campaign activity by including it as part of your plan for the event. Invite campaign participants to document and share events from their own perspective and on their own platforms. (Ask for them to tag you, use a specific hashtag, send you copies, share to a group album, or otherwise enable you to see and track their documentation.)

## Essential Strategy: Implementation and Achieving Lasting Change

Once you achieve some or all of your campaign objectives, you will want to be involved in their implementation. Goals for this implementation stage—and steps you can take to prepare during your pre-launch and early campaign phases—include:

- Holding your state and decision-makers accountable for actually enacting promised changes

*\* Invite key decision-makers to your events, starting with your launch, and try to get them to make public statements about the issue.*

- Ensuring that directly impacted youth and families are engaged in implementation

*\* Ensure that youth and families are a key part of your campaign from the earliest planning stages, and that they get whatever training (media, leadership, etc.) they need to successfully engage.*

– Raising public awareness about the reform

- \* *Build media and community lists and relationships early and sustain them throughout your campaign.*

– Reviewing the practical steps planned for implementation to make sure changes are happening in the right way and at the right level

- \* *Make sure that policymakers, agency officials, and others charged with implementation know that you are watching them closely and are not afraid to publicly criticize actions that are harmful to youth.*
- \* *Bring in successful campaign leaders from other states—early on they can assure people that this can be done, and later on they can help figure out how.*

– Ensuring data is collected and shared on how the implementation is going

- \* *During your information gathering, note which information should be collected but isn't and push for that to happen.*
- \* *Develop relationships with the researchers who collect the data, and educate them about the issues so they can ensure you'll have what you need.*

– Recognizing the hard work that went into the changes and setting the stage for more reform

- \* *Celebrate small wins along the way, and create a culture of always looking to the next improvement that can be made.*

Just as you used multiple strategies in your campaign, the implementation of the changes you have won may require multiple strategies as well. The Youth First website includes examples of how past campaigns have accomplished this.

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