

Youth Visioning Sessions



Goals of the Youth Visioning Sessions

- Get input from young people about how money from youth prisons should be reinvested in their communities to support youth and their families
- Create a new vision of what the juvenile justice system should look like in our communities
- Inform young people about activism and organizing to close youth prisons and invest in alternatives

Materials and Set Up

- Easel paper and markers.
- System floor map
- Chairs set up in a circle.
- Ideally have someone with you to take notes on a laptop.

Introductions

Ask everyone in the circle to briefly introduce themselves.

Icebreaker: Seeking Common Ground

Everyone is seated in a circle with one person standing in the middle (no empty chairs). The person in the middle says, [I am seeking ground with people... wearing black.” Anybody who is wearing black (including the person in the middle) must get up and find a new chair. You can’t take the

chair of the person sitting next to you. The person left without a chair must then say the next statement: “I am seeking common ground with people who...” (The sentence should apply to the person saying it – for example you should only say you are seeking common ground with people wearing glasses if you are wearing glasses). With every statement, people should get up and switch seats if the statement applies to them. The facilitator should decide when to end the ice breaker depending on time and if people seem to be loosened up.

Setting up Ground Rules

- Explain the purpose of the visioning session
- Explain that everything said during the session will be anonymous and will not be attributed to specific person
- Explain that there is “mic rule” so people should not talk over each other

What would you do with \$100,000 a year?

Explain to the group that it costs over \$100,000 a year to incarcerate a youth in Wisconsin and at least \$30 million a year to operate youth prisons in Wisconsin.

Ask the youth:

- What would you or family do with a \$100,000 a year?
- How would you spend \$30 million for your community?

Write the responses on easel paper.

A Walk Through the System

A large floor chart will be displayed showing the different stages of the system: arrest, court (arraignment), alternative-to-detention program, home, court (trial), detention, DJJJ placement, alternative-to-incarceration, probation, and aftercare. Youth will be encouraged to create a scenario and walk through it, or to walk through their own experience. For each stage they step on, they should explain what happened at the different stages. If young people don't want to share their own experiences or create their own scenarios, then the facilitator in offer some scenarios.

Possible Scenarios

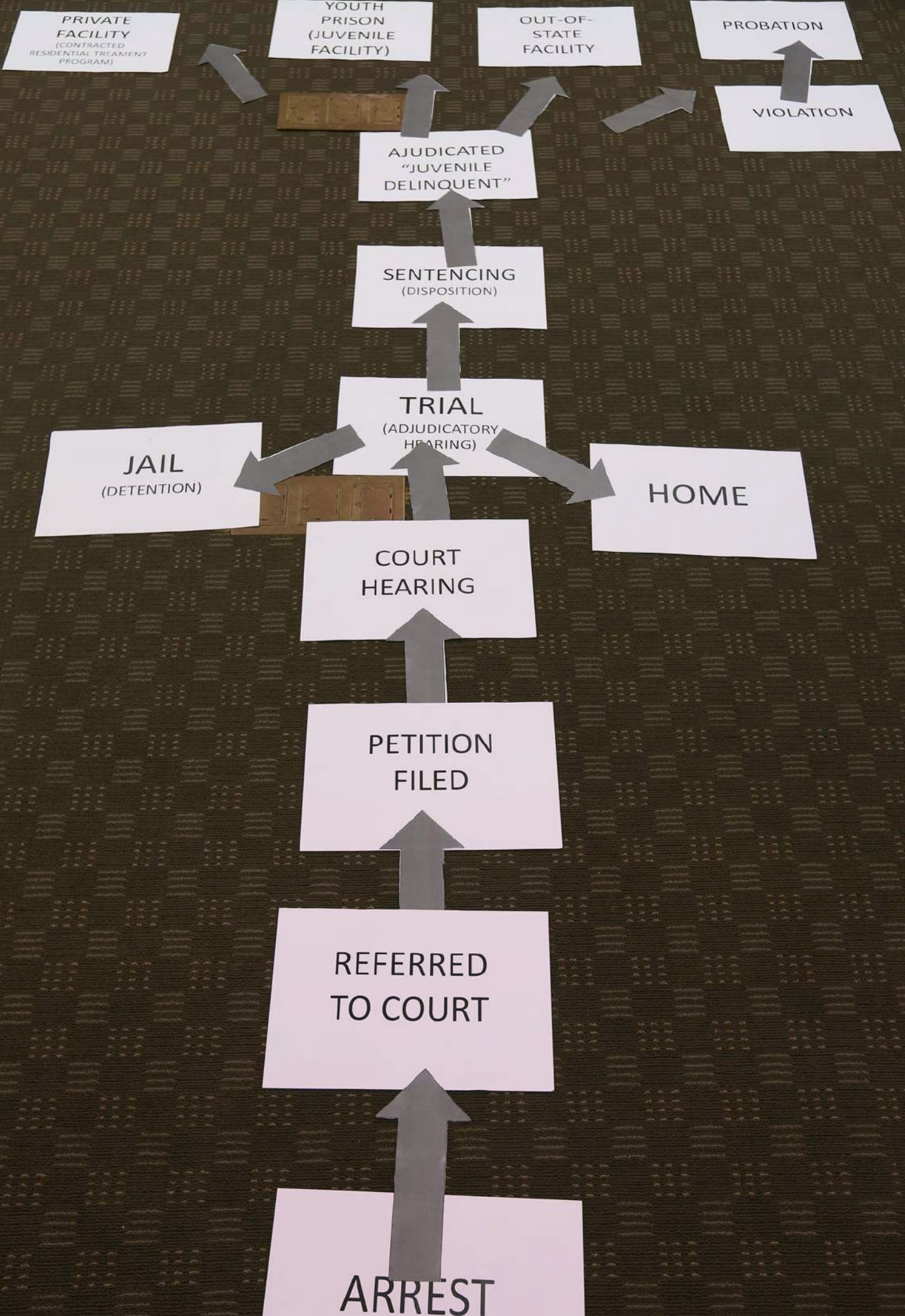
Scenario 1: Johnny is hanging out with a group of friends after school. They walk into a store, and one of his friends pulls out a gun and tells the store owner to hand over the money in the cash register. Johnny is in the wrong place at the wrong time but is arrested and charged with robbery along with everyone else in the group. What happens to Johnny?

Scenario 2: Johnny is constantly bullied by his classmate, Jay. His classmate is constantly teasing Johnny because his mother has drug problem and is always in and out of jail. One day, after his mom is released from jail, Johnny decides to bring a knife to school just to give Jay the message that he should leave him alone. After school, the Jay and some classmates jump Johnny and Johnny pulls out a knife and stabs Jay. What happens to Johnny?

Ask a volunteer to walk through the system and explain what would happen to the young person in the juvenile justice system. Then ask volunteers to suggest what could happen to Johnny instead.

Possible discussion questions

1. What could have been different for this young person at each stage?
2. What programs could be in place to deal with Johnny's actions rather than sending him to prison?
3. How important do you think it is for young people to have an adult that they can count on?
4. What do you think should be done for youth who don't have caring adults in their lives?
5. Is there a way to repay the harm done to a victim without having someone go to prison?
6. If a young person is sent to a residential facility – what should the facility be like? Should it be close to home or far away? Should it be like a prison or more like a home?
7. Do you think there should be community program just for youth involved in the juvenile justice system or do you think community programs should mix youth with system-involved with youth who have not been in the system?
8. Do you think if young people had a chance to earn money legally through a job or internship that they would be less likely to get in trouble?
9. What role does the neighborhood you live in affect your chances of getting arrested?
10. Are there ways to help young people succeed while also building up their neighborhoods?
11. What supports do young peoples' families/ parents need to help young people stay out of the juvenile justice system?



Arrest

Charges

Filed

(Petition Filed)

Court Hearings

Jail (Detention)

Home

Trial

(Adjudicatory Hearing)

Convicted

(Adjudicated)

Sentencing

(Disposition)

Youth Prison (Training School)

Private Facility

(Residential Treatment Program)

Adult

Prison

Probation

Community Program

(Alternative to Incarceration)

Community Program

(Alternative to Court)

violation

violation

Convicted

(Adjudicated)

