



Face2Face: Reimagining youth deflection and diversion in Chicago

Community Engagement Sessions

June 2021



Public Engagement Sessions

- ▶ In June 2021, the Mayor's Office of Violence Reduction and the Mayor's Youth Commission hosted a series of public engagement sessions to solicit feedback and generate ideas to help guide the city's **youth deflection and diversion work**.
- ▶ Participants included **youth, parents, community members, individuals from youth-serving organizations**, and more. We strove to **center and uplift** the voices of young Chicagoans through intentional outreach and recruitment.
- ▶ This document outlines major **themes and takeaways** from these conversations.



How do you envision safety and justice for young people in Chicago?

Participants shared the responses below in an interactive activity during the session:



Preventative

- Provide **economic investment**, pathways to work, skill-building, and mentorship for both youth & families.
 - Historic disinvestment in Black and brown communities has meant the withholding or removal of the **things healthy communities need** (jobs, health care, fresh/healthy food, childcare, etc.).
- It is necessary to **support all youth**, at all levels of risk
- Meet youth **“where they’re at.”** Eliminate barriers to participation.
- Programs should incentivize participation with **stipends**.

Restorative

- Create a **safe space**, a home-like environment. Respect confidentiality, be **trauma-informed**, and prioritize giving youth **second-chances**.
- Place an emphasis on opportunities for youth to **repair harm** and be held accountable while avoiding the trauma of arrest.
- It is necessary to **support all youth**, including those enmeshed in street groups.
- Focus on **building relationships** and addressing the root causes of behavior.

Youth-Led

- “Youth need a **platform to be vocal** about what their needs are because they know what they need.”
- Youth should **codesign & co-build** models. There should be opportunities for youth to help other kids.
- Youth need to see themselves and their identities **represented/reflected** in the adults & program providers.

Additional Themes

- There must be **transparency and accountability** on the part of city leaders and decisionmakers to **rebuild trust**.
- It is important to take a holistic view and include **families** — oftentimes the family needs resources and support as well.
- We should always have **voices of those impacted** at the table — youth and families who have been through JISC.



Participating Organizations/Neighborhood Residents

- Alternative Schools Network
- Center for Conflict Resolution
- ChiByDesign
- Chicago Public Library
- Chicago Public Schools
- Cook County State's Attorney Community Justice Center
- Foster Grandparents
- Heartland Alliance
- Little Village
- Mayor's Youth Commission
- Opportunity Youth
- Precious Blood Ministry of Reconciliation
- South Side
- West Town Academy
- Whitney Young High School

Note: 8 out of 25 participants in the sessions were youth.



**Appendix A:
Responses from session sign up form**



What do you imagine safety and justice for young people would look like in your community?

- No guns in our communities unless to those that can legally have one.
- Currently Chicago looks like the wild wild west. I would like Chicago as a whole, to look like a place that is safe, fun, and people of all kinds living happily together.
- I imagine that the youth would be contributors to a thriving community.
- More job/ police cultural training
- Foster healthy/good relationships between the police and young people at a very early age.
- Most of these young people need others to guide them to help them make decisions because some of them at there young age don't quite understand there transitioning into young adults and still are trying to figure out their future.
- A range of opportunities and places for youth to hang out or work that give them connections to pathways, mentors, fun and food.
- No gun violence by youth or against young people by police.
- The ability to participate in the life of the neighborhood, engage in activities, feel safe while doing so, have access to jobs and employment.
- More resources
- walk down the street and feel safe
- More community centers, tighter relationships and alliances with CPD
- resources
- Engaging activities in our neighborhood
- Practices and policies in place that acknowledge and respect youth voice. An environment that empowers and uplifts youth.
- Being able to enjoy the neighborhood without anxiety or fear of something bad happening.
- Abolishing the police
- Investment in mental Health services: individual, family, and group counseling opportunities
- Diversity of Police presence
- Police presence. Alderman. Community leaders. CAPS.. RESIDENTS....ETC...
- Addressing their needs . Help them understand there are people who will help them .
- An increase in the access to mental health/well-being services, strong diverse academic curriculum, reduction of food desserts, increase of child care opportunities.
- Amplifying youth and family voice and system decisions



What do you imagine safety and justice for young people would look like in your community?

- Access to program and services; Rec centers; safe spaces for youth to meet and engage that is not in the streets; less access to guns
- Full Investment and resources
- I imagine safety and justice for young people in our community will have a great outlook if knowledge, transparency, resources, and respect
- equitable positive, supportive, educational and engaging programming, job opportunities, mentorship, tutoring, wifi/hotspot accessibility
- Them feelings safe and not to worry about stuff
- My concern is less with youth in my northside community than with youth whom I teach as entering college freshmen, coming to Northeastern Illinois University from the south and west sides of Chicago. Many find the northside to be a safe (but boring) haven. Safety for them would mean that police stop targeting their communities and their families. Safety would mean a larger investment in mentoring programs, schools, and after-school activities in those neighborhoods. Justice would mean better employment opportunities, a more positive outlook on their futures.
- Youth voice, priorities, and concerns drive definition of safety and justice
- sport programs, jobs and partnerships between youth and elderly
- I believe youth having access to more social services in their communities would serve as a huge benefit, to provide safety, awareness and justice for us. I also believe when youth are one the path to juvenile detention there should be alternative social services that are available to help avoid youth from experiencing juvenile detention conditions.
- I believe stronger gun laws around guns on the streets and community violence in communities of color would be helpful with the development of youth in disadvantaged communities.
- I believe providing more opportunities and resources for legal employment for youth is helpful. Also, more social service program available in my community.
- Youth need mentorship and a safe space to express themselves. I believe the more mental health, mentorship, substance use, educational and vocational resources that are available in low income communities helps youth to have all the necessary supports needed throughout their development.
- I'd imagine more people out, more people feeling comfortable in their own skin, more people not worried about discrimination, possibly less stress and tension.
- I can imagine positive energy for the community
- resources
- Safe
- Better



Appendix B: Presentation shared at engagement sessions

Agenda

1. Introductions and background
2. Overview of youth deflection and diversion work
3. Brief Q&A
4. Breakout rooms for discussion
5. Share out
6. Next steps



JamBoard: how do you envision safety and justice for young people in Chicago?



Discussion agreements

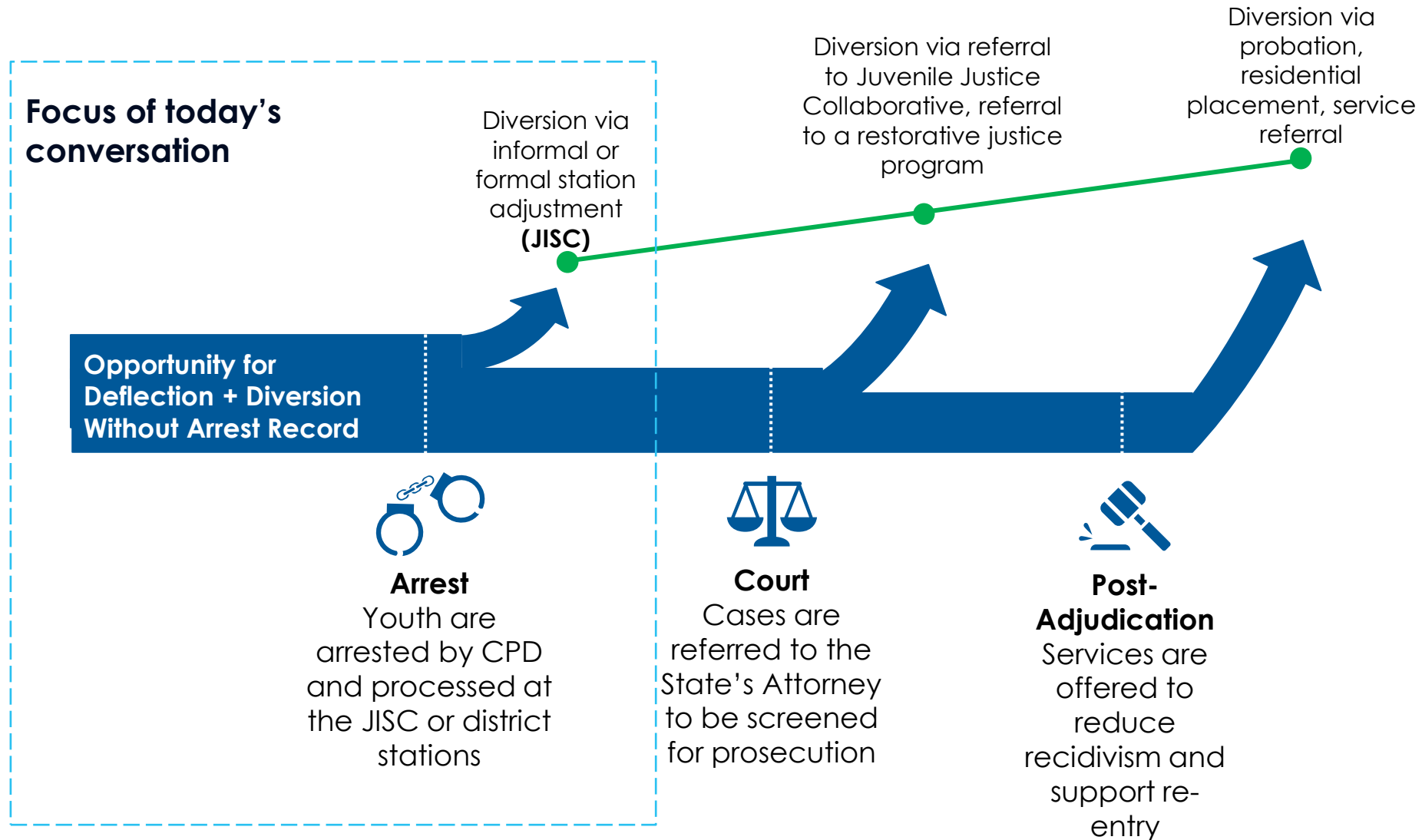
1. Everyone has opportunity to talk – express yourself but leave time to others
 - Use zoom reactions when you can to show that you agree with someone.
 - Use the chat to leave feedback if you don't have time to talk
2. Let us know when you're ready to speak – use zoom reactions to raise your hand or let us know in chat
3. Be real, but be respectful – address each other's points, not each other's character
4. Please be respectful of the space – no recording



The City of Chicago is committed to collaboratively reforming and reimagining diversion and deflection opportunities for young people in Chicago



Current state of youth diversion in Chicago





Feedback on the JISC

- Community conversations:
 - JISC still feels like a police station rather than a diversion opportunity
 - Young people and families are not aware of how JISC works or the diversion opportunities available
 - JISC can be harmful to young people and families
- OIG report:
 - Issues with data collection and record retention at JISC
 - Inconsistency in service delivery at JISC
 - No clear positive outcomes for youth who interact with JISC
- Consent decree:
 - Need for comprehensive policy for how young people interact with police
 - Need for policies on youth diversion and deflection
- National best practices for deflection and diversion:
 - Limited role of law enforcement
 - Access to supports outside of law enforcement contact
 - Community-based opportunities for services and supports



Feedback has led us to rethink how we approach diversion and deflection

We asked questions like:

What are young people seeking as supports to help prevent justice system involvement?

How can the City improve what current systems (like JISC) are offering to meet these needs?

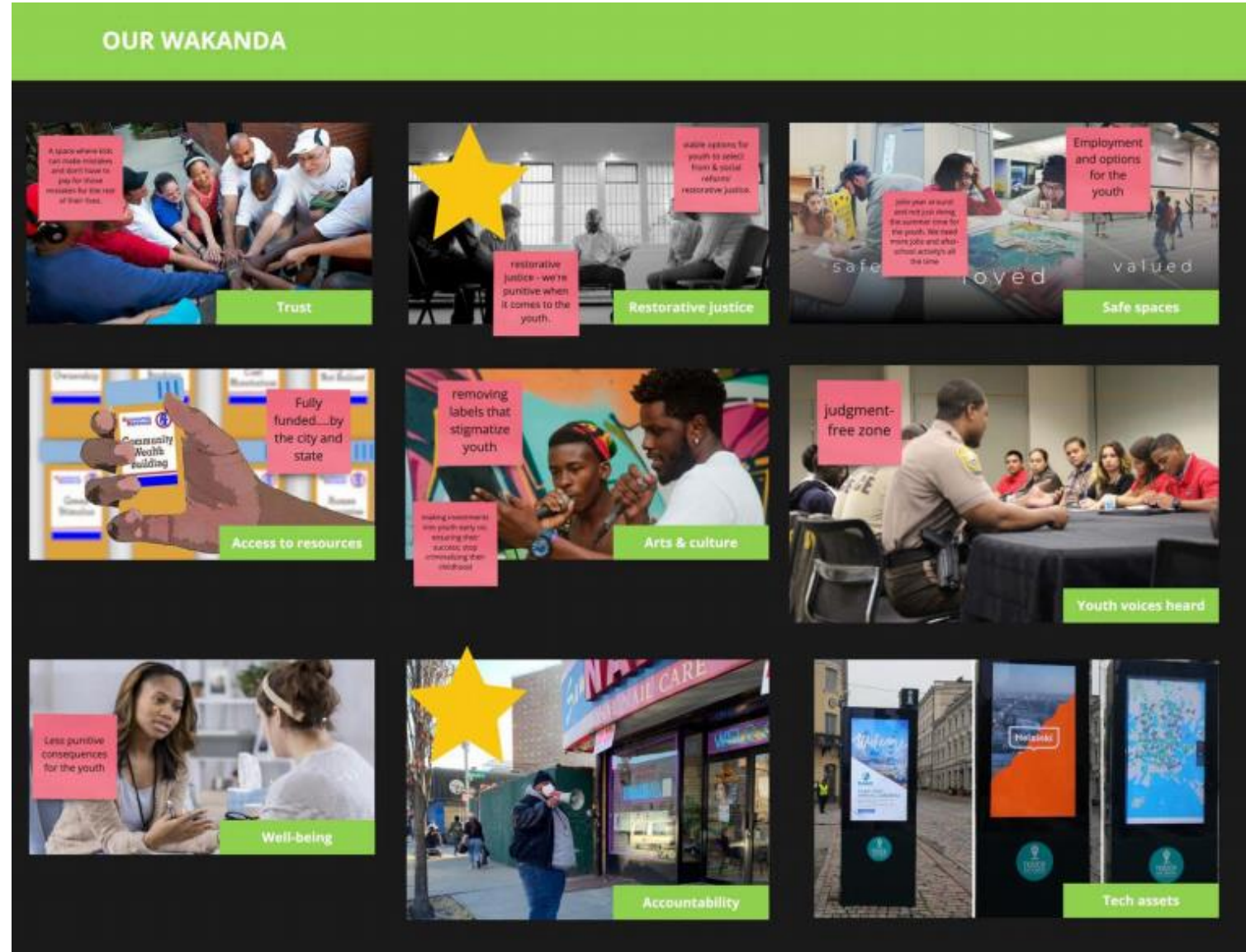
What if we cannot meet these needs within the current systems?

If we want to replace JISC, we need to reimagine safety and justice and think outside the box!



Design process and development of guiding principles

- Partnered with ChiByDesign to conduct two human-centered design sessions
- Participants included youth, parents/trusted adults, and community leaders
- Sessions prompted participants to envision a future community centered on safety, well-being, and justice
- ChiByDesign developed a final report of guiding principles to inform a new youth diversion model







What's next?

- The City has adopted these principles to help guide any youth diversion and deflection work
- Now, how can we implement them?
- We'll discuss further in breakout rooms, but first...

Any questions?



Breakout rooms

Discussion questions:

- As we think about closing and replacing the JISC...
- What specific ideas should be incorporated in the new model that can accomplish this vision?
- How can the City be transparent with this process as we move forward?

Vision	Principle
Preventive, not just reactive	Resource equity
	Early intervention
	Connected pathways
	Family-oriented
Restorative	Community & connections
	Accountability
	Help vs. hurt
Youth-led	Youth appreciation
	Participatory
	Non-judgmental



**Share out: 1-2 takeaways
from the discussion**



Next steps

- Share back synthesized notes/discussion with participants
- Utilize feedback and comments in policymaking/decision making for youth diversion
- Keep participants informed and engaged