



Youth,
Rights &
Justice

20 | ANNUAL 22 | REPORT

CREATING A LASTING IMPACT

Youth, Rights & Justice is a true social change agency actively working to transform the systems that keep our society inequitable and unjust. We undertake public defense and systems change work to make a positive impact on Oregon's children and families.

Youth, Rights & Justice is confronting inequitable systems

... to create a better
world for young
people in Oregon.

In Portland, Black students are 4.3 times more likely to be suspended from school than their White peers.

School discipline, school changes, poor academic performance and absenteeism all are related to increased juvenile justice system exposure.

Black youth in Oregon are 2.5 times more likely, and Native youth more than 1.5 times more likely to be referred to the juvenile department than White youth.

A juvenile record limits a young person's opportunities for housing, jobs, and higher education.

Black and Native American children are placed in foster care much more often and for longer.

Children who spend time in foster care have worse outcomes in education, employment, income, housing, health, substance abuse, and criminal involvement.

Breaking the school-to-prison pipeline

For 20 years, **SchoolWorks** has worked to keep young people in class and succeeding in school. In addition to learning, schools provide social services, recreational programs, and mentoring opportunities. School attendance, performance, and positive school attachment prevent justice system involvement and other problem behaviors such as violence and substance abuse.

The approach: Legal Expertise + Community Partnerships

The team: Education Attorney

The results: During the 2021-22 school year, YRJ assisted 137 young people. For the children in foster care in Portland:

- 100% were re-enrolled or re-instated in school
- 81.8% had reduced absence rates
- 94.4% experienced fewer disciplinary referrals and interventions
- 96.5% established special education plans
- 92.3% demonstrated academic improvement

When asked if it was helpful to have a SchoolWorks attorney, one resource parent said, "On a scale of 1-10, it was a 20!"

Keeping families stable and children safe and at home

The Family Defense Project uses an innovative approach, providing pre-petition legal representation and social supports to parents under child welfare investigation and at risk of having their children removed. Even a brief foster care placement can cause a lifetime of trauma to the child and parent. Sometimes all a parent needs is someone in their corner, to help them get the services and support they need to keep their family together.

The approach: Legal Expertise + Social Work

The team: Attorney + Family Engagement Specialist + Community Partnerships

The results: In the first four months since the launch of this project in May 2022:

- 41 clients screened
- 17 cases accepted
- Kept children out of foster care through legal remedies and helping clients access treatment and services



SCHOOLWORKS



FAMILY DEFENSE PROJECT



Changing systems, changing lives

For 47 years, YRJ has positively impacted children and families through the courts and the legislature. From working with local agencies to advocating at the Capitol, we have been instrumental in shaping law and policy. Our appellate work has shaped Oregon juvenile law for decades, positively impacting children and families statewide. And, when necessary, we sue state agencies to protect the constitutional rights of children.

YRJ has led policy reform efforts at the Capitol and first of its kind programs to address structural inequities in the juvenile justice, dependency, and education systems.

Our juvenile defense work follows a holistic model that ensures our clients' voices are heard and rights are respected.

The approach: Interdisciplinary model integrating legal defense + social work

The team: Attorney + Case Manager + Legal Assistant + Investigator

The results: This approach speaks for itself in the results:

- 1,062 children and families helped in 2021
- 902 helped in the first nine months of 2022 — on track to surpass 2021



**DEFENSE &
SYSTEMS CHANGE**

Creating brighter futures through opportunity

In 2021, YRJ partnered with Lewis & Clark Criminal Justice Reform Clinic to launch the **Record Relief Juvenile Expunction Clinic**. The program helps those with juvenile records get them cleared so they have a chance at a better future.

The approach: Legal Expertise + Community Partnerships

The team: Attorney + Paralegal

The results: Since the launch in August 2021:

- More than 60 clients assisted with their applications in first year
- 100% success rate in contested cases

SchoolWorks Youth Educational Supports (YES) works with youth exiting Oregon Youth Authority facilities and programs to get them back in school and back on track to realizing their dreams.

The approach: Legal Expertise + Social Work + Community

The team: Education Attorney + Social Worker

The results: Since the launch in late spring 2022:

- 13 clients served in the first few months and counting
- Innovative program — one of the first of its kind nationwide



**RECORD RELIEF &
SCHOOLWORKS YES**



Support Youth, Rights & Justice

OUR MISSION

Youth, Rights & Justice advances the rights of children, parents, and families through advocacy in the courts, schools, legislature, and community.

HELP US MAKE A DIFFERENCE

This critical work would not be possible without the support of our donors. With your help, we can ensure children stay in school, keep families together, improve foster care conditions, clear juvenile records, and champion system-wide reforms that impact Oregonians statewide. **Your support is vital. [Please give today.](#)**

WAYS TO GIVE



Make a contribution today to Youth, Rights & Justice at youthrightsjustice.org or from Nov. 1 – Dec. 31 through Willamette Week's Give!Guide at giveguide.org/nonprofits/yroj

Audited financial statements are available at youthrightsjustice.org/about-us.

Contributions to Youth, Rights & Justice are tax deductible.
Tax ID #: 93-0900864

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