

# JUVENILE JUSTICE COLLABORATIVE (JJC) FAMILY SUPPORT PROJECT

## YEAR TWO REPORT | MAY 2024 - APRIL 2025



Care Coordinators and Phalanx Staff at Phalanx Family Services

**I FOUND THE  
CONFIDENCE TO BE  
ABLE TO FIGHT FOR MY  
CHILD'S NEEDS. IT WAS  
SUCH AN INSPIRATION.  
SGA PARENT TESTIMONY**

For additional information about this report. Please contact Strengthening Chicago's Youth at [scy@luriechildrens.org](mailto:scy@luriechildrens.org).

Ann & Robert H. Lurie  
Children's Hospital of Chicago

**J**uvenile  
**J**ustice  
**C**ollaborative

**THANK YOU TO THE COOK COUNTY OFFICE  
OF THE CHIEF JUDGE, AMERICAN RESCUE  
PLAN ACT (ARPA) FUNDING TO SUPPORT  
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FAMILY SUPPORT  
PROJECTS!**



**THANK YOU TO OUR JJC PARTNERS WHO  
HOSTED FAMILY SUPPORT PROJECTS!**



## ABOUT THE JJC FAMILY SUPPORT PROJECT

Year two of the JJC Family Support Project spanned from May 2024 through April 2025. This report summarizes the purpose, activities, successes and areas of opportunity for growth.

The purpose of the Juvenile Justice Collaborative (JJC) Family Support Project is to promote innovative strategies to support the families of justice-involved youth. This project also serves to strengthen the collaboration between TASC and JJC providers. In addition, the project seeks to add family support services and activities as a referral service modality from TASC to JJC partners. Many partners used this year's funding to bolster existing services as a continuation from the first year of the project.

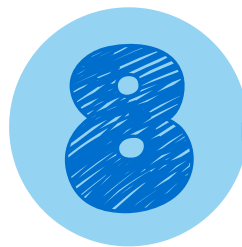
### OUT OF THE 9 PARTICIPATING JJC PROVIDERS



**6** Organizations enhanced parent and guardian engagement with the court process.



**8** Organizations increased parents' and guardians' knowledge of how to support their child.



**8** Organizations met parents' and guardians' basic needs.

Organizations were required to address at least two of the three tiers of support for parents and caregivers.



**OVER 350 PARENTS/CAREGIVERS AND FAMILIES WERE SERVED THROUGH THE PROJECT!**

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## JJC FAMILY SUPPORT PROJECT ACTIVITIES

JJC partners used a variety of approaches to support families with a youth involved in or at risk of becoming involved in the justice system. Programs aimed to address multiple risk factors for juvenile justice involvement related to family cohesion by promoting family bonding events and addressing youth and family trauma, issues of poverty, and ongoing mental and behavioral health needs of the family.

Services and activities across the projects supported the five protective factors for strengthening families including parental resilience, social connections, concrete support in times of need, knowledge of parenting and child development, and social emotional competence of children.

Through this project, parents and caregivers were empowered to provide safe and supportive spaces for their children. By listening to feedback and centering lived experiences, the various programs aimed to build trust, strengthen parent-child relationships, and supports both immediate stability and long-term resilience for justice-involved families.

“ I learned ways to be a more interactive parent.

Maryville Parent Testimony ”

## SERVICES & ACTIVITIES FOR FAMILIES

- Educational Workshops
    - Court Education
    - Know Your Rights
    - Know Your School Rights
    - Financial Literacy
  - Parent Leadership Conference
  - Parenting Self-Assessments
  - Parenting Classes
  - Parenting Support Groups
  - Grief Support Groups
  - Caregiver and Family Counseling
  - Court Advocacy
  - Cultural Emersion Trips
    - Sporting Events
    - Theater and Plays
    - Museums
    - Urban Air and Whirly Ball
  - Baking Classes
  - Family Engagement Activities
    - Community Events
    - Holiday Parties
    - Cultural and Milestone Celebrations
  - Funds for Basic Needs and Emergency/Crisis Assistance
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## SUCCESSES: INNOVATIONS AND BEST PRACTICES

Similar to last year, key themes that emerged, demonstrate how relationship-driven, flexible, and culturally responsive approaches—combined with practical strategies—created a foundation for meaningful and sustained family engagement.

- Holistic Services
  - Programs integrated activities like behavioral health, legal navigation, youth development, workforce readiness, and emergency financial support to meet both immediate and long-term needs.
  - Integration of wellness practices (mindfulness, dance, breathing techniques) addressed trauma through body and mind healing. Healing through creative expression also offered restorative experiences that resonated deeply with families.
- Practical Tools for Empowerment
  - Workshops offered actionable tools (e.g., 504 plans, legal rights) that families could immediately apply.
  - Families gained confidence navigating complex systems (e.g., court processes, school supports).
- Safe, Welcoming, and Culturally Relevant Spaces
  - Programs offered intentional time for families to fellowship before workshops created community and belonging.
  - Family-style meals and enrichment outings promoted bonding and celebration.
- Consistent and Thoughtful Communication
  - Regular check-ins with families before events fostered a sense of care and inclusion.
  - Follow-up communication and surveys showed families that their feedback was valued and incorporated into future programming.
- Building Dependable Relationships
  - Ongoing, hands-on support with parents and youth built trust.
  - Trauma-informed and relational approach increased family engagement and retention.

One of the most successful approaches has been...walking alongside mothers of justice-involved youth during some of their most challenging moments—particularly during court proceedings, counseling sessions, and medical appointments. This hands-on, relationship-based support model has helped reduce isolation, build trust, and ensure families feel seen and supported throughout complex and often intimidating systems.

New Life Centers Staff

We were on the verge of losing our home. I tried every everything to keep this from happening. Thanks to the program we were able to pay our rent to stay in our home. I also worked with the employment coach at the agency who helped find a more permanent job for me too. Talk about life changes!

Lawrence Hall Parent Testimony

## SUCSESSES: INNOVATIONS AND BEST PRACTICES

"I enjoyed the information that was presented and having an open forum to ask questions and interact with other members of differing views"

BUILD Parent Testimony

- Parent Peer Support
  - Parenting groups emphasized joy, healing, and fostered shared learning and peer bonding.
  - Parents valued learning from each other and building a supportive community.
- Youth Engagement to Support Caregiver Participation
  - Activities for young people ran parallel to caregiver workshops, reducing childcare barriers and increasing parent and caregiver participation.
  - Youth success was celebrated alongside families, reinforcing positive outcomes.
- Flexible and Inclusive Program Delivery
  - Multi-format offerings (in-person, virtual, one-on-one) improved accessibility.
  - Workshops were offered in multiple languages to ensure inclusivity.
  - Use of virtual tools like QR codes for registration and feedback to simplify participation.
- Collaborative Program Development
  - Families shaped future programming through surveys and ongoing feedback.
  - Services offered reflected community needs and interests, increasing relevance and participation.
- Strategic Incentives for Participation
  - Gift cards, food, coats, and other supports helped families meet basic needs and encouraged participation.
  - Emergency funds and support services increased stability and trust in the programs.
  - Stipends to offset wage losses for parents (e.g., to attend court and support their young person)
- Strong Collaborative Partnerships
  - Cross-agency collaboration (within the JJC and other external organizations) expanded the network of care and improved service coordination and reduced duplication.
  - Guest speakers and community partners provided diverse expertise.

"We received a referral to support a student to engage in school-based mentoring, counseling, and employment services as part of his service plan with TASC. We worked with the Becoming a Man (BAM) counselor at his school upon receiving the referral to provide outreach to the student and family and enroll him in BAM for the remainder of the year. We also collaborated with the School Culture Coordinator to refer him to GRO Community services in the school building that focus on serving boys who were recently involved in the criminal justice system. Additionally, the student was referred to employment and tutoring supports in the school and the mother was given a Ventra pass to help get the client to school."

Youth Guidance Staff Testimony

# OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH

Many of the challenges experienced by staff and families from last year were identified this year as areas that have improved but represent ongoing opportunities for growth. Programs highlighted the need for better collaboration coordination, systemic and community investment, and more flexibility in supporting families to remove barriers to participation.

- Family Referral, Recruitment and Engagement
  - Difficulty recruiting families, requiring more targeted approaches and expanded outreach.
  - While helpful for some, there were ongoing challenges with consistent parent participation despite supportive assistance (transportation, childcare, stipends, etc.).
  - Many parents and caregivers are processing significant personal loss and/or trauma, which can affect their capacity to fully engage with services.
  - Stronger collaboration needed linking families directly from TASC to the JJC partners.
- Systemic and Structural Barriers
  - Families face persistent systemic issues such as financial hardship, housing and employment insecurity, community violence, and trauma.
  - Navigating the legal system navigation continues to be a complex and intimidating barrier for families.
  - Lack of investment in infrastructure in certain areas impedes communication. (e.g., poor cellular reception in under-resourced neighborhoods).
- Program Coordination and Data Tracking
  - Programs continue to have challenges collecting and tracking program attendance, referrals, and survey completion.

“Being relentless with our participants and parents is vital to the youth success”

UCAN Staff Testimony

