

CAMPAIGN FOR

YOUTH  JUSTICE

BECAUSE THE CONSEQUENCES AREN'T MINOR

Case Profiles Toolkit

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Hello Partner in Juvenile Justice Reform!

On behalf of the Campaign for Youth Justice (CFYJ), a national campaign dedicated to ending the practice of trying, sentencing and incarcerating children under 18 in the adult criminal justice system, we would like to invite your participation in the CFYJ Case Profiles Project. The Case Profiles Project gathers personal stories from individuals that have been jailed or prosecuted under age 18 in the adult criminal justice system as well as their parents and families. The purpose of collecting these stories is to understand the experiences, perspectives, and recommendations for change of those who are or have been directly affected by the prosecution of children in the adult criminal justice system. We hope to establish a platform for youth and families to communicate to policymakers, the public and the media their concerns and the real-life impact of state correctional programs on youth and families.

Your assistance in this effort is greatly needed and appreciated. Your story will help us to achieve our goals of:

- raising awareness about the negative impact of prosecuting youthful offenders in the adult criminal justice system and of incarcerating youthful offenders in adult jails and prisons;
- reducing the number of youthful offenders who are tried, sentenced, and incarcerated in the adult system, rather than adjudicated in the juvenile justice system;
- decreasing the harmful impact of trying youthful offenders in adult court; and
- promoting research-based, developmentally-appropriate rehabilitative programs and services for youthful offenders as an alternative to the adult system.

Case profiles are particularly integral to our awareness work in which we highlight youth, parent, and family voices through reports, policy briefs, publications, newsletters, and the CFYJ website. We hope that this toolkit contains everything you need to effectively tell your story. The toolkit includes: a consent form, because we will not share any information about you without permission; tips on how to write your profile; example stories; an informational form with questions to guide your writing; information on where to send your case profile; and paper on which to write your story.

Thank you so much for your participation in this project. With your help we can effect change and reform the juvenile justice system. If you need to reach us for any reason during your participation in the project, please contact:

Kate Figiel  
Campaign for Youth Justice  
1012 14<sup>th</sup> Street NW, Suite 610  
Washington DC 20005  
Phone: 202.558.3580  
Email: [kfigiel@campaign4youthjustice.org](mailto:kfigiel@campaign4youthjustice.org)

We look forward to hearing from you!

Kate Figiel  
Communications and Outreach Assistant  
Campaign for Youth Justice

**Case Profiles Project Consent Form**

**Purpose:** The Campaign for Youth Justice (CFYJ) is collecting case profiles from individuals that have been jailed or prosecuted under age 18 in the adult criminal justice system as well as their parents and families. CFYJ uses case profiles to inform national and state policymakers, the public and the media about why youth should not be prosecuted as adults.

**Contact Information:**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_  Male  Female

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_

**Status (check all that apply):**

**ID Number/Facility/Address/State (if applicable):**

- Formerly incarcerated
- Formerly jailed
- Currently incarcerated
- Currently jailed

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Consent (check any that apply):**

Yes, I give the Campaign for Youth Justice my consent to talk with me about my experience.  
 Name (signature): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Yes, I give the Campaign for Youth Justice permission to make my case profile, but **not** my name or any personal identifying information, publicly available to policymakers, the media and the public on the CFYJ website, newsletter, and in CFYJ materials. I would like to use the following as an alias when referred to in CFYJ materials: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name (signature): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Yes, I give the Campaign for Youth Justice permission to make my name and my case profile publicly available to policymakers, the media and the public on the CFYJ website, newsletter, and in CFYJ materials.  
 Name (signature): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Yes, I give the Campaign for Youth Justice permission to edit the my case profile for length and readability.  
 Name (signature): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please contact me after release. Expected release date: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact information after release:  
 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**Parent consent (if youth is under 18):**

Yes, I give the Campaign for Youth Justice my consent to talk with me about my son or daughter's experience in the adult criminal justice system.  
 Name (signature): \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Case Profiles Project Informational Form

**Please share any/all of the following information on the provided sheets of lined paper. Feel free to use additional sheets or type your responses as well as include any poetry, pictures or other information that will help in writing your case profile.**

1. Background information: Please tell us a little about yourself and your family.
2. Stories of life in adult criminal justice system: Tell us about your personal experience in jail or the adult system. Do you have any stories you'd like to share?
3. Access to programs & services in the adult criminal justice system: Please tell us about what kind of programs and services are/were available in jail or the adult system such as education, health care, mental health, recreation, and other programs.
4. Disproportionate contact of youth of color with justice system: Do you think that your race and/or ethnicity was/is a factor in your court proceedings and/or treatment in jail or an adult facility?
5. Looking to the Future: How do you see your future being affected by your experience in jail or the adult justice system? What challenges are you facing? What are your hopes, dreams, and goals?
6. Recommendations for change: How would you change current policies that jail children under 18 or try, sentence and incarcerate them in the adult criminal justice system?
7. Other information: Please feel free to share any other information that would highlight your personal or family's experience with jails or the adult criminal justice system.

**Please send the signed consent form, the informational pages and any other materials by mail, fax or email to the appropriate state office listed below:**

Connecticut: Abby Anderson, Connecticut Juvenile Justice Alliance, 2470 Fairfield Avenue, Bridgeport, CT 06605; Phone: 203.579.2727; Fax: 203.333.9118; Email: [abby@ctjja.org](mailto:abby@ctjja.org)

North Carolina: Sorien Schmidt, Action for Children North Carolina, 1300 St. Mary's Street, Suite 500, Raleigh, NC 27605; Phone 919.843.6623; Fax 919.829.7299; Email [sorien@ncchild.org](mailto:sorien@ncchild.org)

Virginia: Abigail Turner, Just Children, 1000 Preston Avenue, Suite A, Charlottesville, VA 22903; Phone: 434.977.0553; Fax: 434.977.0558; Email: [abigail@justice4all.org](mailto:abigail@justice4all.org)

Wisconsin: Wendy Henderson, Wisconsin Council on Children & Families, 16 N. Carroll Street, Suite 600, Madison, Wisconsin 53703; Phone: 608.284.0580; Fax: 608.284.0583; Email: [whenderson@wccf.org](mailto:whenderson@wccf.org)

For all other states and DC: Kate Figiel, Campaign for Youth Justice, 1012 14<sup>th</sup> Street, NW, Suite 610, Washington, DC 20005; Phone: 202.558.3580 ; Fax: 202.386.9807; Email: [kfigiel@campaign4youthjustice.org](mailto:kfigiel@campaign4youthjustice.org)

## Storytelling Tips and Guidelines

- ❖ Be honest and sincere.
- ❖ Include background information and describe situations, experiences, and feelings when relevant.
- ❖ Be succinct and concise. Include details and descriptions when you believe they are pertinent to your story.
- ❖ Use language that is confident and serious.
- ❖ For privacy purposes, please do not include your case number or the names of attorneys or judges.
- ❖ Do your best with grammar, word choice, sentence structure, and spelling but do not worry excessively about this because, with your permission (see the Case Profiles Project Consent Form), we will edit your story prior to using it.
- ❖ Feel free, but not obligated, to include information about your crime(s) and sentence(s).
- ❖ Know that you, and only you, are the expert on your experience. All of your experiences and feelings are valid.

## Case Profile Examples

The following are examples of case profiles that we have included in publications and on our website. Your story does not need to conform to these formats or lengths but we include them to provide a sense of what kind of language and information we have found to be powerful in sharing the stories of those who have been jailed or incarcerated as children. Additionally, while the following are all told from an outsider's perspective, feel free to write from the perspective of whomever you'd like: yourself, a friend, an anonymous outsider, etc.

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**Katherine**, originally a charming and bright young child, experienced a distinct personality change while growing up. She became increasingly isolated and secretive, but the behavior was ignored by her parents who thought it normal adolescent rebellion. This behavior quickly escalated into skipping school, doing drugs, and becoming involved with an abusive boyfriend. The drug use escalated and she was in and out of the juvenile justice system without any serious mental health evaluation, despite evidence that her infractions were likely caused by a mental illness. When she resorted to stealing her mother's car to pay for her habit, Katherine was charged as an adult for grand theft auto and sentenced to an adult facility.

**James** came from a good family but struggled in school. When he faced failing grades in his freshman year, his parents got him a tutor for home-schooling. This tutor, a 38-year-old woman, initiated a sexual relationship with James and promoted him from the ninth grade without making him do any work. James then became addicted to drugs when he used them after a knee surgery. He turned to crime to pay for his habit, committing burglaries and robberies. In 2001, an accomplice for one robbery shot and killed two teenagers. James was convicted of felony murder and is now serving two life sentences without possibility of parole. While he believes he should be held accountable for his actions, James feels the punishment is too heavy for a child.

**Dwayne** was an honors student in middle and high school. He had a large number of friends his age and older, and at the age of 16 he drove to Fairfax, Virginia, with a group of friends. There he robbed a man in his car with a gun. He was arrested the next day and sentenced as an adult. Dwayne spent eight years in prison, but he would not let it ruin his life. Naturally intelligent, Dwayne spent much of his time reading, working as a law clerk, and teaching himself Spanish. When he was released in March 2005, he found a job and enrolled in Prince George's Community College, where he currently thrives. He has secured acceptances to American University and Goucher College. He hopes to become an English professor, mentor, and husband.

**Jane's** parents divorced when she was a toddler, so she was raised almost entirely by her single mother. Throughout elementary and most of middle school, Jane was a promising honor-roll student. In eighth grade, however, she began hanging with a bad crowd, using marijuana, and showing symptoms of depression. Her parents sent her to an outpatient drug program, where she met a controlling boyfriend who convinced her to experiment with a variety of drugs. After getting back, she took her mother's car without permission. Her mother reported the car stolen, and when she was caught, Jane was tried as an adult and given probation. Jane realized that this was the time to turn her life around, so she began attending school regularly and even got a job. Her attempts at reform were in vain when one day, late for school, she borrowed a neighbor's bicycle without permission. The neighbor reported the bike stolen, and the theft violated Jane's probation. She was sent to jail for 75 days. The misdemeanor will remain on her record for the rest of her life.

**John** was sent to the juvenile justice system at the age of 12 for driving without a license. After spending some time in the juvenile justice system, John was unable to return home as his parents had split up while he was gone and neither was able to care for him. The system bounced John around between different group homes for five years and then released him to fend for himself when he turned 17. Having nowhere to go, John broke into a car one cold winter evening and slept in it. For this offense, he was jailed for one night and sent to live with some relatives. He never received papers informing him of his court date, so he was arrested for not attending his hearing and sentenced to six months in adult jail. He spent those six months underfed and without any educational opportunities. John's situation arose not out of his own mistakes, but rather the failure of the criminal justice system to give him the help he needed.







