



BECAUSE THE CONSEQUENCES AREN'T MINOR

“Youth Justice Awareness Month”
Event Planning Guide

Prepared by the Campaign for Youth Justice

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CAMPAIGN FOR
YOUTH JUSTICE

BECAUSE THE CONSEQUENCES AREN'T MINOR

Dear Youth Advocate:

Congratulations! You've decided to get involved with National Youth Justice Awareness Month!

National Youth Justice Awareness Month (YJAM) is held every October as an opportunity for communities, families, youth, and allies to host community-led actions and events that expose the consequences of children being prosecuted in the adult criminal justice system and placed in adult jails and prisons. With events happening throughout the country, YJAM is not only a time to raise awareness but also a time to build collective action, to strengthen relationships with other advocates, and to join local advocacy campaigns working to create policy changes.

In taking action, you will be joined by many other people throughout the country in sharing your views on the impact of state policies of trying and sentencing children as adults, the over-incarceration of youth, and why these laws require changes to reflect the last 20 years of research.

This guide contains:

- Tips on getting started
- Step-by-step instructions to plan your Youth Justice Awareness Month event
- Event planning timeline
- Templates and sample materials

We hope you find this information helpful as we work together to make a difference in the lives of our nation's children.

Sincerely,

The Campaign for Youth Justice

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How to Get Started

Objectives

The most successful event will:

- Fundraise!
- Educate!
- Motivate!

Still, every event will have particular priorities. Recognizing the key objectives of your event before you get started will make it all the more successful.

When you are developing your goals, be detailed and realistic by setting numeric benchmarks.

If your goal is to fundraise, your benchmarks will include:

- Amount raised through corporate and individual sponsorships;
- Amount raised through ticket sales;
- Amount raised through silent auction, raffle or other fundraising tools.

If your goal to educate or to motivate, your benchmarks will include:

- Number of attendees;
- Number of new contacts made;
- Number of educational and action materials distributed;
- Amount of press received.

Later, you will evaluate the success of your event using the benchmarks you just chose.

First steps

Engage others to help! Get together a “host committee,” ideally a group of five friends or colleagues, to help you plan. Assign the following roles:

- Event Coordinator/Logistics;
- Community Outreach;

- Sponsorships and Donations;
- Food;
- Media.

When inviting your host committee, it is best to familiarize yourself with what will be required from each position. Here is some idea of the tasks specific positions require:

Everyone

Of course, there's much that will be most successfully completed as a group, beginning with the determination of the event objectives—which will guide the whole process—to the search for a venue, the pooling of the guest list, and the day-of-the-event responsibilities.

Event Coordinator/Logistics

The Event Coordinator will be largely responsible for keeping everyone on track by maintaining a master calendar, sending reminders and updates to the host committee and tracking progress. This person will get the ball rolling by appointing the host committee and organizing the ongoing committee meetings/conference calls. Other logistical responsibilities include:

- Establishing and maintaining the event budget
- Finalizing seating chart
- Making arrangements for decorations
- Confirming food and entertainment
- Coordinating delivery of materials to venue
- Printing out guest list for sign-in table
- Generating checks for entertainer/caterer
- Organizing a debrief session
- Sending Thank You letters to host committee

Community Outreach

The Community Outreach member should have strong ties to the community—beginning with the design and distribution of invitations and publicity materials, this member will be responsible for spreading the word and attracting a crowd. This member will also serve as the Volunteer Coordinator by organizing volunteers for the planning and event logistics.

Sponsorship and Donations

The Sponsorships and Donations member will need to get started right away by identifying and soliciting potential corporate sponsors. This person will need to follow-up with potential sponsors and confirm successful sponsorships as the event approaches. Logistical responsibilities include:

- Printing sponsor publicity materials and signs
- Sending Thank You Letters to corporate sponsors

Food

Food is critical for most, if not all, events. From the start, the Food member is responsible for determining how much food will be needed and subsequently identifying and soliciting local businesses for food donations. As the event approaches, this member will confirm successful donations, determine what food is still needed, develop the food budget and purchase food. Other logistical responsibilities include:

- Planning for rental or purchase of linens, serving platters and utensils, plates and napkins
- Coordinating food pickups
- Ensuring that food is properly stored and refrigerated
- Laying out and displaying food
- Sending Thank You letters to food donors

Media

Publicity is always great! The Media member will be responsible for press coverage, and here some experience will be quite useful. This person will begin by researching which reporters or departments to target and then following-up with pitch calls, media advisories and press kits. Post-event, this member will send a press release to relevant media outlets telling them how much money was raised for added coverage.

At every step of way:

- Keep expenses minimal;
- Know your audience;
- Reach out to as many people as possible.

Step-by-Step Planning

Choosing your event

There are all types of events—keep in mind your main objectives and the demographics of your attendees when you choose from the following:

- 5k Run/Walk or other type of race
- Sports Tournament
- Community Service Day
- Luncheon
- Dinner party
- Cocktail party
- Chocolate- or wine-tasting
- Tea party
- Reception
- Concert
- Art/Fashion show
- Fair/carnival
- Guest speaker
- Panel discussion
- Educational workshops
- Silent auction/raffle
- Rally
- Letter writing/petition drive
- Poetry slam

Mix and Match!

These event ideas aren't mutually exclusive—some of the most successful events incorporate multiple activities.

- 5k + Poetry Slam
- Dinner party + Silent auction
- Luncheon + Guest speaker

- Reception + Wine tasting
- Panel discussion + Educational workshops
- Tea party + Letter writing/petition drive
- Fair/carnival + Concert

Choosing your venue

The key question for choosing your venue is the number of expected attendees. If it's a smaller event, you can always host in your house or at a friend's. If that's not an option, seek out local spaces such as:

- Community centers
- Churches/temples
- Art galleries
- Restaurants
- Schools
- Parks
- Performance centers

When choosing your venue, consider:

- Parking
- Convenience of location
- Ambience
- Exclusive caterers required
- Rental fees

Designing invitations

Sending out email invitations, as opposed to printed invitations, may be your best option if your event budget is modest. See page 9 for an "Invitation Template" or make a free account and send out e-invitations at www.evite.com.

Corporate and Individual Sponsorships

Corporate and individual sponsors will be a main source of revenue for your event's expense budget. At your next event committee session, decide how you plan to recognize the businesses that decide to donate. Here are some ideas:

- Recognize at the event
- Feature in the event program

- List on the invitation
- Honor in your organization's newsletter
- Acknowledge on your organization's website

Start by asking people or establishments with whom you already have relationships, for example your favorite lunch place or a board member's family business.

Even if your list is set, it's always a good idea to cultivate new relationships by contacting other local businesses. Research and call potential donors in the immediate area of your office or event, following this easy script:

- Keep your first line short—ask for the person in charge of donations or community involvement.
- Once you're connected to the right person, introduce yourself and your organization in ten words or less. Let them know that you're looking for sponsors for your community event and you're hoping they will join other local businesses in supporting the work that you do in their community. Ask them if they would like you to send along further information.
- The person you're speaking with will tell you how to apply for donations. Don't hesitate to ask how to spell your contact's name and title at the organization—that will make writing a letter later much easier.

Compile a spreadsheet of potential donors (see *Sponsorship Spreadsheet*). Make sure that you record all contact you have with them—including emails and phone calls—in the "Notes" section.

The next step is to fill out and print solicitation letters (see *Corporate Sponsor Letter Template*). Ideally, you should hand deliver these along with event publicity materials. If that is not possible, you can fax or email as requested by the business.

Follow-up! Five days after you send out the letters, make follow up calls to those who haven't responded. Use this script:

- Ask to speak with your contact. When you're put through, remind them of who you are and when you last spoke and confirm that your letter was received.
- At that point, you will most likely get your answer. If they can't donate—thank them for their time and ask if they would like to be contacted for future events. If they agree, be sure to note that. If they can donate—thank them and confirm event logistics.

Food

Most, if not all, events will require you to serve food. If you're having a sit-down dinner, you will need to hire a caterer. When you speak with caterers, be sure to:

- Get quotes from multiple catering companies—prices can vary significantly;
- Ask if they offer a not-for-profit discount;
- Remind them that your order should not include taxes.

For events besides dinners, look to local businesses for in-kind donations before spending any money on food. Compile a spreadsheet of potential donors (see *Food Solicitation Spreadsheet*) and keep track—just as you did when soliciting corporate sponsors. Remember that only a small percentage will agree to donate, and—depending on the size of your event—there will probably need to be a great deal of collaboration as each establishment may only donate one dish. Devise specific “asks” for each restaurant, which you will fill out in the “Potential Item” column. To help, browse through online menus.

To solicit food donations, follow the same step-by-step instructions as you did when you solicited individual and corporate sponsors.

Here are some logistical items to remember:

- Plastic plates and cutlery
- Plastic cups
- Tablecloths
- Serving utensils and platters (if not included with food)
- Ice, ice box, and ice scoop
- Set up and clean up volunteers

Remember to keep track of your purchases in our *Event Budget Spreadsheet*.

Volunteers

It's always great to get a group of volunteers together to help out at the event. Try to get this group involved as early on as you can, that way they will have a greater sense of ownership over the event, help with ideas for improvement and be more likely to spread the word.

Establish time shifts for the volunteers so that they can spend some of their time enjoying the event. Be specific about their responsibilities, some of which may include:

- Set up

- Manning information tables
- Welcoming and signing-in guests
- Serving food or drinks
- Clean up

See page 28 for our *Volunteer Event Shifts* template table.

Community Outreach

Here are some ways to attract as many people as possible to your event:

- Post information on your website;
- Send out your invitations to everyone on your contact and donor lists;
- Follow-up on RSVPs with phone call and email reminders;
- Disseminate your invitations through your listserves;
- Make a Facebook event and post on Twitter;
- Post flyers in community spaces;
- Post blurb in local newspapers;
- Have your friends, staff and host committee spread the word!

Debrief and Evaluate Success

Your work isn't over when you're done cleaning up—debrief is a critical piece of any major organizational effort. Organize a meeting/conference call with your host committee and volunteers to hear their extended opinions. Review the initial objectives and determine how the event measured up, where it succeeded and where future improvements will be needed. Distribute our *Debrief Form* [see page 34] to staff, volunteers and the host committee to collect formal data.

Master Event Timeline—Staying on Track

Assign tasks to branches of your host committee: Event Coordinator/Logistics; Community Outreach; Sponsorships and Donations; Food; and Media. Of course, there are many that will be best handled as a team.

3+ Months Prior:

- Determine event objectives
- Start search for event venue
- Appoint host committee
- Establish the event budget [see “Budget Spreadsheet”]
- Identify and solicit potential corporate sponsors

3 Months Prior:

- Organize 1st host committee meeting/conference call
- Start email chain with host committee
- Follow-up with corporate sponsors and confirm successful sponsorships
- Determine how much food is needed

1-3 Months Prior:

- Identify and solicit potential food donors, time needed is largely dependent on the quantity of food you expect to be donated
- Follow-up with food donors and confirm successful donations

2 Months Prior:

- Organize 2nd host committee meeting/conference call
- Develop invitation list—pool contacts, update contact information
- Design invitations and send to printer
- Send save-the-date notices by mail or email

4-6 Weeks Prior:

- Organize 3rd host committee meeting/conference call
- Organize a meeting with volunteers to solicit ideas and confirm availability to help staff event
- Design signs and publicity materials
- Send invitations by mail or email
- Finalize and send media advisory and other press materials
- Make initial pitch calls to publications and columnists
- Plan for rental or purchase of linens, serving platters and utensils, plates and napkins

3 Weeks Prior:

- Organize 4th host committee meeting/conference call

2 Weeks Prior:

- Organize 5th host committee meeting/conference call

- Establish volunteer shifts and confirm availability
- Send out reminder email to invitees
- Mail press kits to daily news reporters, producers and editors
- Make first round of media follow-up calls
- Determine what food is still needed, develop budget, purchase food

Week of:

- Organize 6th host committee meeting/conference call
- Finalize seating chart—fill empty seats with volunteers and staff
- Make final arrangements for decorations
- Confirm food and entertainment
- Print publicity materials and signs, for organization and for sponsors
- Call “VIPs” to follow-up and confirm
- Follow-up with press
- Email your advisory or press release to all relevant outlets
- Make another round of media pitch calls

Day before:

- Print out guest list for sign-in table
- Generate checks for entertainer/caterer, if required
- Deliver decorations and publicity materials to venue
- Send reminder email to invitees
- Confirm press
- Organize 7th host committee meeting/conference call

Day of:

- Arrive for set-up early in the day
- Coordinate food pickups
- Be dressed and ready for the event 45 minutes before guests arrive
- Track progress—give updates on how much money is being raised
- Give credit—be sure to thank publicly everyone who made your event possible.
- Greet all guests. Make introductions. Mingle!

Post-Event:

- Clean up
- Send Thank You letters to all sponsors, community partners, volunteers and host committee members.
- Organize a debrief session with the host committee and volunteers to assess the event’s success and ideas for future improvement.
- Send a press release to relevant media outlets telling them how much money was raised. Include a photograph from the event.

**Now exhale.
Congratulate yourself on well-executed, successful
Y-JAM Event!**

Host Committee Invitation Letter Template

Insert your organization's logo here

Date

Name

Title

Organization

Address 1

Address 2

Dear Name,

On behalf of Name of Host Organization I would like to invite you to serve as a member of the host committee for our upcoming Youth Justice Awareness Month (YJAM) event.

YJAM was designed to bring awareness to youth in the adult criminal justice system and build momentum for state-wide youth justice reform efforts and to put grassroots organizing tools directly into the hands of youth, parents and families at the forefront of these efforts. Our YJAM event will distribute "Take Action" packets with new, exciting ideas for organizing; creative new outreach materials including an educational DVD, stickers, bracelets and other engagement tools to activate, motivate and engage others!

As a host committee member, you will be recognized along with other individuals and organizations who support the YJAM event. We hope that you will take a leading role in planning the event, as well as contribute a donation of \$X. You will receive X number tickets and be listed as a host committee member in the event program.

I appreciate your consideration and hope you will join us for this wonderful occasion! Please let me know if you have questions or need additional information.

As always, thank you for your time!

Best,

Name

Title

Template Save-the-Date

Save the Date!

You're cordially invited to join us at our

Youth Justice Awareness Month!

Community Event & Book Signing



*A few make a difference
many make a movement*

Date

Time

Name of Venue

Address

Featuring:

Name of VIP/Keynote Speaker

Beverages and dessert will be served

To RSVP, please email: **Contact Email Address**

Organization Website

Media Advisory Template

Insert your organization's logo here

For Immediate Release
Date

Contact: Contact Name
Organization Name
Contact Phone Number

****MEDIA ADVISORY****

Name of Organization will host
"National Youth Justice Awareness Month" Community Event

WHAT: On **Date**, **Name of Organization** will host the ***Youth Justice Awareness Month (YJAM)*** community event at **Event Location and Address**. At the event, we will feature the release of *A Question of Freedom*, a new book authored by R. Dwayne Betts about his experience in the criminal justice system.

YJAM was designed to bring awareness to youth in the adult criminal justice system and build momentum for state-wide youth justice reform efforts and to put grassroots organizing tools directly into the hands of youth, parents and families at the forefront of these efforts. Our YJAM event will distribute "Take Action" packets with new, exciting ideas for organizing; creative new outreach materials including an educational DVD, stickers, bracelets and other engagement tools to activate, motivate and engage others!

WHO: [List key attendees, including keynote speaker, organization's Executive Director]

WHEN: Date and Time

WHERE: Event Location and Address

[Insert organization's mission statement.]

For more information, visit: www.XXX.org

###

Keynote Speaker Letter Template

Insert your organization's logo here

Date

Name

Title

Organization

Address 1

Address 2

Dear Name,

On behalf of Name of Host Organization I would like to invite you to be the keynote speaker at our upcoming Youth Justice Awareness Month (YJAM) event, to be held in Location (City) of Event on Date of Event. This event offers you a unique opportunity to share your expertise and research with Location (City) of Event policy makers, advocates, lawyers and youth-service practitioners.

YJAM was designed to bring awareness to youth in the adult criminal justice system and build momentum for state-wide youth justice reform efforts and to put grassroots organizing tools directly into the hands of youth, parents and families at the forefront of these efforts. Our YJAM event will distribute "Take Action" packets with new, exciting ideas for organizing; creative new outreach materials including an educational DVD, stickers, bracelets and other engagement tools to activate, motivate and engage others!

The event will feature:

- Ways you can get involved!
- A preview of the CFYJ's "Childhood Interrupted" film!
- Take action kits with buttons, bracelets & more!
- Prizes, snacks & refreshments!

[Insert short paragraph on the details and timeframe of your specific event.]

Your travel and expenses will be covered. Thank you so much for your time and consideration. I will be in touch with you to follow up. In the meantime, I can be reached at (XXX) XXX-XXXX or by email at XXX@XXX.org.

Sincerely,

Name

Title

Organization

Sponsor Solicitation Letter Template

Insert your organization's logo here

Date

Name

Title

Organization

Address 1

Address 2

Dear Name,

On behalf of Name of Host Organization I would like to invite you to serve as an organizational (\$100) or individual (\$50) sponsor of our upcoming Youth Justice Awareness Month event, to be held in Location (City) of Event on Date of Event. The event will feature keynote speaker Name, Title and Organization.

Consider these facts:

- Every year, an estimated 250,000 children are prosecuted in the adult criminal justice system;
- Thousands of children, charged as adults, languish in adult jails on a daily basis where they are at risk of assault, abuse and suicide;
- Children tried as adults face life-long consequences such as finding a job or getting a college degree to help them turn their lives around;
- These punitive federal and state policies don't work. In fact, research shows that they decrease public safety.

Over the years, we have witnessed a steady stream of research demonstrating unequivocally that trying and sentencing children in adult court does not reduce crime; in fact, it does just the opposite. This body of research comes from many sources including the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) at the U.S. Department of Justice, and one of Washington's premier think-tanks, the Brookings Institution.

Additionally, public opinion polling – commissioned by the MacArthur Foundation, the National Council on Crime & Delinquency, and the Campaign for Youth Justice – strongly shows that the public favors investment in rehabilitation and treatment of youth and strongly opposes placing children in adult jails and prisons.

States have pressed forward in undertaking significant reform efforts, with victories in over 23 states, paving the way for others to follow suit. The voices of youth, their parents and families - most impacted by these policies – were at the forefront of these efforts.

At the YJAM event, we will provide “*Take Action*” packets with new, exciting ideas for organizing; creative new outreach materials including an educational DVD, stickers, buttons and bracelets and other engagement tools to activate, motivate and engage others!

The event will feature:

- Ways you can get involved!
- Take action kits with buttons, bracelets & more!
- Prizes, snacks & refreshments!

To thank you for your support, you or your organization will be:

- Recognized at the event;
- Featured in the brochure and the program;
- Honored in our newsletter that reaches **X Number** of national, state and local organizations and individuals nationwide.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I will be in touch with you to follow up. In the meantime, I can be reached at **(XXX) XXX-XXXX** or by email at **XXX@XXX.org**.

Together, we can continue to make a difference on behalf of our nation’s young people!

Sincerely,

Name
Title
Organization

Solicitation Letter Template

Insert your organization's logo here

Date

Name

Title

Company

Address

Dear Name,

On behalf of **Organization Name** -- an organization dedicated to ending the practice of prosecuting youth under the age of 18 in the adult criminal justice system -- we are writing to invite you to serve as a community partner for our upcoming **Youth Justice Awareness (YJAM) Month** event on **Day, Month Date, 20XX from X pm – X pm** at the **Name of Venue** located at **location address**. At the event, we will feature the release of *A Question of Freedom*, a new book authored by R. Dwayne Betts about his experience in the criminal justice system.

As a community partner, your business will be:

- Featured on our organization's website;
- Recognized at the event & listed in the event program;
- Honored in our newsletter that reaches **X Number** of national, state and local organizations and individuals nationwide.

We are requesting that **X Business** contribute by donating **X food/X auction item** to our YJAM event. This event offers **X Business** an opportunity to support a local organization dedicated to improving the lives of young people in **[your state]**. In addition **X Business** will have the opportunity to promote its services to over **X number** community members and professionals from the corporate, not-for-profit and education sectors.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I will be in touch with you to follow up. In the meantime, I can be reached at **(XXX) XXX-XXXX** or by email at **XXX@XXX.org**.

Together, we can continue to make a difference on behalf of our nation's young people!

Sincerely,

Name

Title

Organization

Volunteer Chart

Sponsor Thank You Letter Template

Insert your organization's logo here

Date

Name

Title

Organization

Address

Dear Name,

It is my pleasure to acknowledge receipt of your tax exempt \$ Amount donation to the Organization Name and to thank you for becoming a sponsor of our Youth Justice Awareness Month event on Date at Time at the Name and Address of Event Venue.

YJAM was designed to bring awareness to youth in the adult criminal justice system and build momentum for state-wide youth justice reform efforts and to put grassroots organizing tools directly into the hands of youth, parents and families at the forefront of these efforts. Your generous contribution helped to ensure that we were able to call to action the over X Number community members who attended our event!

Thank you again for your willingness to support our Youth Justice Awareness Month event in its work of advocating for an equitable justice system for all America's children.

With Gratitude,

Name

Title

Template Thank You Letter to Host Committee and Volunteers

Insert your organization's logo here

Date

Name

Title

Organization

Address

Dear Name,

Thank you so much for serving on the host committee for/volunteering at Organization Name's *Youth Justice Awareness Month* event! All of your hard work and support certainly paid off – the event was a great success and an enjoyable time for everyone.

YJAM was designed to bring awareness to youth in the adult criminal justice system and build momentum for state-wide youth justice reform efforts and to put grassroots organizing tools directly into the hands of youth, parents and families at the forefront of these efforts. Your generous contribution helped to ensure that we were able to call to action the over X Number community members who attended our event!

Once again, thank you for all your hard work and for your willingness to support YJAM in its work of advocating for an equitable justice system for all America's children.

With Gratitude,

Name

Title

Debrief Form

Insert your organization's logo here

**Thanks so much for helping to plan
our *Youth Justice Awareness Month* Community Event!**

Please take a few moments to complete this short survey to ensure that our future events are as successful as possible.

Rate the following criteria on a scale of 1-5 (5 being the best)

Host Committee

	1 <i>(poor)</i>	2	3 <i>(fine)</i>	4	5 <i>(great)</i>
Teamwork					
Efficiency of meetings					
Long-term strategy and preparation					
Setting goals					
Meeting goals					
Community Involvement					
<i>Comments:</i>					

Event Logistics

	1 <i>(poor)</i>	2	3 <i>(fine)</i>	4	5 <i>(great)</i>
Volunteers					
Decorations					
Keynote speaker					
Food – Quality? Quantity?					
Entertainment					
Press Coverage					
Attendance					
<i>Comments:</i>					

Please return this form to **Name** at **XXX@XXX.org**