

JEFF WALLACE

Keynote Speaker | Juvenile Justice Expert | Leadership Trainer



Meet Jeff Wallace

Jeff Wallace is a nationally recognized speaker and twice-featured TEDx presenter whose life and career span nearly every side of juvenile justice. By age 12, he was on probation; by 14, in residential treatment. At 17, he was waived to adult court and spent six years in prison, including four in solitary confinement.

After release, Jeff returned to the same juvenile facility he had escaped from as a young person. He volunteered there for five years before being hired and eventually supervising multiple programs. He later earned degrees in Legal Studies and Criminal Justice and built a career across frontline youth services, state facility inspection and licensing, higher education, and executive leadership, including serving as an Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice and Human Services and holding superintendent positions across multiple states.

Jeff brings a rare 360° perspective, combining lived experience, academic insight, regulatory experience, frontline service, and executive leadership to advocate for juvenile justice reform and meaningful change.

Featured Keynotes

Jeff tailors the emphasis, stories, and practical takeaways of every keynote to the audience, event theme, and objectives.

Thriving After Resiliency

Signature Keynote

Jeff challenges audiences to look beyond survival. Through lived experience, chess principles, and practical strategies for accountability, self-care, and renewal, he explores what comes after resiliency and how people can move toward purpose, growth, and thriving.

From Pawn to Purpose

Drawing on chess lessons Jeff learned during incarceration, this keynote explores how leaders recognize potential, strengthen culture, develop others, and build a legacy that extends beyond any one person or position.

Words Matter

Building on Jeff's story and the themes of his book, this keynote explores how words, labels, expectations, and self-talk shape identity, behavior, relationships, and culture, and how intentional communication can change what people believe is possible for themselves and others.

What People Say

Your presentations at our conference provided a meaningful opportunity to learn about the challenges and best practices in successfully meeting the educational needs of youth involved in the juvenile justice system and encourage actionable change across the country. – U.S. Department of Education and NDTAC

An engaging presenter with real-life experience within the system. Jeff is amazing, providing encouragement and reminding us of our role as catalysts of change. – Juvenile Facility Supervisor

It is so rare to go to a conference and hear someone talk about a topic that directly relates to me, my job, and my life. – C. Kahn

What Audiences Take Away

Jeff brings together lived experience and professional insight to challenge attendees to think differently about people, leadership, communication, and change. His presentations combine compelling stories with practical ideas they can apply in their work, organizations, and lives.

Audiences leave with:

- Greater awareness of how words, leadership, and everyday interactions shape people and organizational culture
- Practical tools to strengthen accountability, communication, and purpose
- A new perspective on resiliency and what it takes to move beyond simply surviving
- A clearer framework of how meaningful change can take root in both people and systems

Selected Organizations & Events



*This moment,
is the best moment!*
Jeff Wallace

Organizational Training

Jeff also provides customized training for juvenile justice organizations and youth-serving systems, drawing on experience in frontline service, facility oversight, higher education, and executive leadership.

Leadership Development
Organizational Culture
Staff Development & Accountability
Safety & Security
Operational Consistency
Process Improvement

Available as standalone organizational training.

Bring Jeff to Your Next Event.

Book Jeff for a tailored keynote or customized organizational training



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