



PRISON TRANSPARENCY PROJECT REPORT:

The School-to-Prison Pipeline: A Crisis for Young Men

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THE SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE: A CRISIS FOR YOUNG MEN

13.1 Understanding the School-to-Prison Pipeline

- **What Is the School-to-Prison Pipeline?** The school-to-prison pipeline refers to the troubling national trend where children, particularly those from marginalized communities, are funneled out of public schools and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems. This pipeline is fueled by policies and practices that prioritize punitive discipline over educational support, disproportionately affecting young men of color.

- **Impact on Young Men:** Young men, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, are particularly vulnerable to being drawn into the school-to-prison pipeline. This system sets them on a path toward incarceration rather than education, effectively criminalizing them at an early age and perpetuating cycles of poverty and disenfranchisement.

13.2 The Role of Preventative Services

- **Supporting Young Men During Critical Brain Development: Preventing Trouble Through Early Investment:** The period before the age of 26 is crucial for young men, as their brains are still developing. Neuroscience shows that the human brain, particularly the prefrontal cortex responsible for decision-making and impulse control, does not fully mature until around the age of 26. During these developmental years, young men are more prone to risky behavior, being impulsive, and poor decision-making. Without adequate support and guidance, these young men are at a high risk of engaging in criminal activities. Investing in education, mentorship, and supportive community programs is crucial to keep them out of trouble, providing positive guidance and opportunities while their brains are still developing. This support helps prevent involvement in criminal activity and reduces incarceration rates among youth and prevents future crimes by setting young men on a better path in life while they're still young. This form of crime prevention would not only prevent crime committed by young men, but would help avoid the normalization of criminal thinking and behaviors for entire lifetimes.

- **The Need for Preventative Services:** To disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline, it is essential to provide comprehensive preventative services that address the root causes of delinquency. These services should include mentoring, counseling,

educational support, and programs that build life skills and promote positive decision-making. By intervening early, we can help young men stay on track and avoid the pitfalls that lead to incarceration.

13.3 The Consequences of Neglect

- **Long-Term Impact:** When young men are not given the support they need during their formative years, they are more likely to be drawn into a life of crime. Once entangled in the criminal justice system, it becomes increasingly difficult for them to escape, leading to a cycle of recidivism and further marginalization.

- **Societal Costs:** The failure to provide preventative services not only harms the individuals affected but also has significant societal costs. The financial and social burden of mass incarceration, coupled with the loss of human potential, is a heavy price to pay for neglecting the needs of our youth.

13.4 Moving Toward Solutions

- **Investing in Youth:** Society must make a concerted effort to invest in youth, particularly young men who are at risk of being drawn into the school-to-prison pipeline. This means reallocating resources from punitive measures to programs that empower young men to succeed. Education, mental health services, mentorship, job training, and community support are all essential components of a preventative approach.

- **Reforming School Discipline:** Schools play a critical role in either perpetuating or disrupting the pipeline. Reforming school discipline policies to focus on restorative practices rather than punishment is key. By addressing behavioral issues through support and education rather than exclusion, schools can help keep young men on a positive path.

This report is part of a series produced by the Prison Transparency Project, aimed at uncovering and addressing issues within the prison system. For additional reports and recommendations, please visit our website at

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