

Kansans United for Youth Justice

Accountability that Works, Justice that Lasts

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Report: Kansas must address racial disparities in juvenile justice system

TOPEKA, KAN. – Racial inequity is a pervasive issue in the United States criminal justice system, and juvenile justice is no exception. A report released today by Kansans United for Youth Justice demonstrates racial disparities in Kansas are higher than national averages in various stages of the juvenile justice system.

“The data is clear,” said Quinn Ried, policy research analyst at Kansas Appleseed, a member organization of Kansans United for Youth Justice. “Racial disparities are entrenched at every level of the juvenile justice system in Kansas.”

Racial discrimination in juvenile justice is evident early on. Based on the most recent year of available data (2013-14), black preschool students in Kansas are 5.6 times more likely than white preschool students to receive an out-of-school suspension.

The largest disparities in Kansas occur at the arrest level, which is at the front end of contact with the juvenile justice system, and disparities have worsened over time. In 2013, black youth were 4.5 times more likely to be arrested than white youth. This disparity ratio is the highest since at least 2005 and is more than twice the national rate.

Because disparities are highest at the arrest stage, the report also analyzes how disparities relate to policing practices. Seventy reporting law enforcement agencies (17.3 percent) in Kansas self-reported they were in violation of a least one of three basic policy requirements outlined by state statute: annual racial and other biased-based policing training for officers; an agency prohibiting racial or other biased-based policing; and/or specific disciplinary procedure for officers who violate the policy.

In addition to analysis, the report provides recommendations for reducing racial inequities in the Kansas juvenile justice system.

Read the full report at www.KUYJ.org/resources.

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