

**Lake County Juvenile Justice Council
Memorandum**

Date: August 28, 2026

To: Lake County Juvenile Justice Council

From: Linsay Hale
Juvenile Justice Coordinator

Subject: **LCJJC Youth Advisory Board: Research & Recommendations**

Background: The establishment of a Youth Advisory Board (YAB) is a key performance measure of the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission grant that funds the Lake County Juvenile Justice Council (LCJJC). However, there is currently limited guidance regarding the appropriate composition, structure, or mission of a YAB. At the July LCJJC meeting, members requested that staff review existing Youth Advisory Boards across Illinois and the nation to identify promising practices and develop recommendations regarding the establishment of a YAB for the LCJJC.

Research: YABs are typically a structured group of young people who provide input, recommendations, and leadership to an organization, government agency, school, or community initiative. A YAB ensures that young people help shape the policies, programs, and services that affect them. A YAB can be especially valuable because it brings the voices of youth with lived experience into planning and decision-making.

For the LCJJC, a YAB could become one of the council's signature initiatives. It would align well with the renewed focus on restorative justice, reducing racial and ethnic disparities, strengthening community partnerships, and ensuring youth voices are incorporated into the county's juvenile justice planning

Staff reviewed several existing Youth Advisory Boards to identify promising practices and inform recommendations regarding structure, mission, purpose, and effectiveness (Attachment A).

Common purposes of a Youth Advisory Board

- Advise on juvenile justice policies and programs.
- Identify barriers and unmet needs facing youth.
- Review existing services and recommend improvements.
- Assist with strategic planning.
- Participate in community outreach and awareness campaigns.
- Help plan youth-focused events and trainings.

- Provide feedback on grant-funded initiatives.
- Advocate for positive youth development and restorative practices.

Typical membership

- 10–15 members between the ages of approximately 14–21.
- Youth from diverse backgrounds and communities.
- Youth with lived experience in the juvenile justice system, foster care, behavioral health services, or other relevant systems (when appropriate and voluntary).
- Students, youth leaders, and young adults interested in leadership development and community service.

Roles and responsibilities

- Attend monthly meetings.
- Participate in discussions and provide recommendations.
- Serve on JJC committees when appropriate.
- Help evaluate programs.
- Speak at community events.
- Recruit other youth leaders.
- Participate in leadership and civic engagement training.

Potential benefits to the LCJJC

- Improve the relevance and effectiveness of programs.
- Increase community trust and transparency.
- Meet youth engagement expectations of IJJC and ICJIA grant.
- Identify issues adults may overlook.
- Develop future community leaders.

Identified best practices

- Compensation (stipends, gift cards, or service-learning credit).
- Provide orientation and leadership training.
- Ensure meetings are youth-friendly and interactive.
- Give members meaningful influence—not just symbolic participation.
- Pair youth with adult mentors while allowing youth to lead discussions.
- Regularly communicate how their recommendations were used.

Potential mission statement

The Lake County Youth Advisory Board empowers young people to partner with the Juvenile Justice Council in creating a fair, equitable, and effective juvenile justice system. Through leadership, collaboration, and lived experience, Youth Advisory Board members provide

recommendations that improve policies, programs, and opportunities for youth throughout Lake County.

Proposed Implementation:

Phase 1: Establish the Foundation

- Determine the purpose and goals of the Youth Advisory Board.
- Identify how the YAB supports the JJC Strategic Plan and Juvenile Justice Plan (if there is one?)
- Develop a draft mission and vision statement
- Define the role of the YAB (advisory, advocacy, project-based, etc.).
- Determine the relationship between the YAB and the JJC Board (e.g., regular reports, committee participation, voting/non-voting status).

Phase 2: Governance

- Develop bylaws or operating guidelines.
- Establish membership requirements, including:
 - Age range
 - Residency requirements
 - Desired representation from across Lake County
 - Length of service
 - Attendance expectations
- Develop an application and selection process.
- Determine how vacancies will be filled.

Phase 3: Recruitment

- Identify recruitment partners, including:
 - Schools
 - Youth-serving community partners
 - Juvenile probation
 - Diversion and restorative justice programs
 - Community-based organizations
 - Faith organizations
- Develop outreach materials and application forms.
- Establish a timeline for recruitment and selection.

Phase 4: Youth Support

- Develop an orientation program.
- Provide leadership development and public speaking opportunities.
- Establish adult mentors or staff liaisons.

- Determine transportation assistance, meeting locations, and accessibility needs.
- Explore stipends, volunteer service hours, or other incentives for participation.

Phase 5: Operations

- Determine meeting frequency and format.
- Establish annual priorities and work plans.
- Develop procedures for bringing recommendations to the JJC.
- Identify opportunities for YAB participation in committees, community events, and trainings.

Phase 6: Evaluation

- Develop measures of success.
- Conduct annual member satisfaction surveys.
- Track recommendations made and actions taken by the JJC.
- Evaluate member recruitment, retention, and diversity.
- Report accomplishments annually to the JJC Board.

Proposed YAB make-up for discussion:

Element	Recommended LCJJC Approach for Discussion
Age:	16–21
Size:	10–15 youth
Geography:	Representation from throughout Lake County
Experience:	Prior justice-system involvement encouraged, but not required
Term:	2 years, with staggered terms
Meetings:	Monthly
Adult support:	Appointed adult coordinator/facilitator
Compensation:	Stipend strongly recommended (gift card?)
Training:	Juvenile justice system, leadership, advocacy, restorative justice, public speaking
Relationship to JJC:	Formal advisory body with regular reports to the JJC

Element	Recommended LCJJC Approach for Discussion
Youth autonomy	Youth establish annual priorities and at least one youth-led project
Deliverable	Annual recommendations to the JJC
Evaluation	Track recommendations and whether/how the JJC responds

Youth experience → Youth identify issue → Youth research issue → Youth recommendation → JJC response → Action

Council Action Items:

To move the initiative forward, the Council should consider the following:

1. Does the JJC support establishing a Youth Advisory Board?
2. What is the primary purpose of the YAB?
3. Who will provide ongoing coordination and administrative support?
4. Should youth serve on JJC committees or only in an advisory capacity?
5. What age range should be represented?
6. Should members include youth with lived experience in the juvenile justice system, or should membership be broader?
7. How many members should serve on the YAB?
8. How often should the YAB meet?
9. Will participation include stipends or other incentives?
10. What resources or funding are needed to successfully launch and sustain the YAB?

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ATTACHMENT A – Sample of Existing YABs

Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission Youth Advisory Board

Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission Youth Advisory Board

- Up to 15 young adults, chosen by application process.
- Ages 18–24
- Members have been impacted by the juvenile justice system
- Members meet twice monthly
- Members receive a stipend
- Three-year cohort model in which YAB members establish mission, values, objectives, and projects.

Oregon Juvenile Justice Youth Advisory Board

Oregon Judicial Department Juvenile Justice Youth Advisory Board

- 6 young adults impacted by the juvenile justice system
- Members meet monthly.
- Members created a list of system-specific recommendations, set priorities and presented outcomes.

California Office of Youth and Community Restoration Youth Advisory Board

California Office of Youth and Community Restoration Youth Advisory Board

- Consists of 15 youth with lived experience.
- Members meet weekly, with one monthly meeting open to the public.
- Creates a space for youth to collaborate with policymakers.
- Works on policies and projects, present at justice-centric conferences.

Growth Works — Western Wayne Youth Advisory Council, Michigan

Growth Works Youth Advisory Council

- Consists of youth with lived experience in the youth justice system.
- Developed a handbook for youth and families.
- Provides a pathway for youth to participate in broader juvenile justice reform efforts by working with County Board, creating a direct line between youth and organizational decision-makers.

Illinois DCFS Statewide & Regional Youth Advisory Boards

Illinois DCFS Statewide Youth Advisory Board

- Four regional YABs plus a statewide board.
- Youth ages 14–21
- Participate in leadership development, policy discussions, advocacy, and identifying improvements to child welfare services.
- Regional boards meet monthly, and participation is incentivized.