

# CfJJ in 2011

## ADVOCACY:

**Justice for Kids** is CfJJ's campaign to have Massachusetts include most 17-year-olds in its juvenile justice system – as the vast majority of other states do – rather than automatically send them all to its adult criminal system, no matter how minor their offense, as it does now. We collected stories of the experiences of 17-year-olds in the adult system; brought the issue to stakeholders, policy-makers and advocates; raised awareness with *CfJJ on the Run 5K*; and published a report, *Minor Transgressions, Major Consequences: A picture of 17-year-olds in the Massachusetts juvenile justice system*, showing the high cost – to individuals and families involved, public safety, and taxpayers – of treating 17-year-olds as adults and the potential benefits of including them in the juvenile system instead.

CfJJ believes that public policy must be informed by evidence; collecting and analyzing data is one of our core functions. In December we published **Data•Points**, a report that highlights both positive trends (including the drop in the juvenile crime rate and the decline in the number of kids entering the system) and stubbornly persistent problems such as continuing gaps in data collection and troubling racial disparities.

**Arrests of kids in school** contribute directly and significantly to the “school-to-prison pipeline”. With the ACLU, we have been examining school-based arrests in Boston, Worcester and Springfield. In 2011 we completed extensive data collection, analysis and interviews with local officials. Our report will be released in early 2012.

More than a dozen progressive **juvenile justice bills** are pending in the legislature, including proposals to eliminate life without parole for juveniles, create a “Romeo and Juliet” exception to the statutory rape statute, and create a parent-child privilege. With other advocates, CfJJ has worked to educate legislators and the public about the need for these reforms.



Michael Summersgill (RFK Board), Lael Chester (CfJJ), Joseph P. Kennedy III (RFK Board)  
CfJJ's Executive Director, Lael Chester, was honored by the Robert F. Kennedy Children's Action Corps with its Embracing the Legacy Award at a dinner at the John F. Kennedy Library in June.

CfJJ responds to and helps shape **media coverage** of juvenile justice issues. For example, CfJJ wrote an opinion piece published in *The Provider* about creating a parent-child privilege and an Op-Ed in *The Boston Herald* advocating for stronger efforts to decriminalize teen prostitution. CfJJ's Executive Director was interviewed by *WBUR* and *The New York Times* about the age of juvenile jurisdiction.

CfJJ participates in many **collaborative efforts** to improve the juvenile justice system, including the Governor's Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee; the DMC Committee of the Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative; the Massachusetts Juvenile Justice Task Force on Racial Disparities; and the Massachusetts Children, Youth and Families Advisory Committee. We are also involved in peer-learning coalitions such as Cultivating Youth Voices and the National Juvenile Justice Network.

## EVENTS

***Good. Fast. Cheap. (Pick All Three). Why Diversion Works for Kids.*** CfJJ's half-day conference in April highlighted best practices in juvenile diversion. Pre-arraignment diversion that directs kids to community-based programs rather than to formal processing in the juvenile court can be an effective strategy for dealing with many minor offenders at a lower cost, yet it is shockingly underutilized in the Commonwealth. At our July Juvenile Justice Forum, ***Taking Care of Our Own***, Professor Simon Singer of Northeastern University shared his research on how geography, socioeconomic status, and race affect children's access to delinquency prevention, treatment, and diversion programs. Finally, we welcomed more than 130 guests to our annual **Leadership Celebration** on December 1. Both our honoree, Scott Harshbarger, and our keynote speaker, Vinnie Schiraldi, are shining examples of what real leadership can accomplish in juvenile justice reform.



*CfJJ on the Run*, a 5K walk/run at Jamaica Pond on a brilliant Sunday morning in October, attracted more than 120 participants of all ages. One of 16 walk/runs taking place across the country as part of national Youth Justice Awareness Month, *CfJJ on the Run* highlighted the problem of trying youth as adults.

## LOOKING AHEAD TO 2012

February 8: CfJJ's next Juvenile Justice Forum will feature author David Chura, who spent many years teaching high school to kids sentenced as adults in New York. He will read from and discuss his book *I Don't Wish Nobody to Have a Life Like Mine*.

March 29: CfJJ's half-day conference on using the Positive Youth Development approach in the juvenile justice system. Keynote speaker: Dr. Jeffrey Butts, a nationally-recognized leader on PYD.

October: *CfJJ on the Run*—our second 5K walk/run.

November 29: CfJJ's 2012 Leadership Celebration.

CfJJ's members and donors, event sponsors and attendees, and foundation supporters – especially the Gardiner Howland Shaw Foundation and the Public Welfare Foundation – all make our work possible. Thank you so much!