

## **FACING REALITY: THE NEED FOR TRAUMA-FOCUSED CARE IN THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM**

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The percentage of children in the juvenile justice system (“JJS”) who have mental health problems is staggering. Also staggering is the percentage of children in the JJS who have experienced abuse and neglect. Children with mental health problems, as well as abused children, have needs that surpass the current training and education provided by the JJS to professionals working with these children. These children require care that is trauma-focused and rehabilitation efforts that differ from the punishment-focused JJS currently in place.

This Article will show that the majority of children in the JJS have mental health needs or suffer from trauma. Youth in the JJS often do not have parental support, and they often come from backgrounds where they were abused. This Article argues that kindness and treatment are more effective for such children than punishment, which leads to children not receiving the services they need. This Article concludes with an analysis of legal arguments

that can be used to obtain appropriate services for these children.

Part II of this Article discusses children and mental health, focusing on statistics of mental health issues within the JJS. Part III examines how children in the JJS have experienced abuse, and Part IV looks at different remedies that the JJS can implement to ensure that children in the JJS are receiving the treatment they need and deserve.