

ANNUAL REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR

AJJAC's Mission:

To provide support, advice and guidance to the government and citizens of the State of Alaska, in accordance with the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act. To help reduce and prevent juvenile crime, while ensuring that Alaska's youth are provided meaningful opportunities to succeed.

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- **JJDP Act Reauthorization**
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Committee Members:

- Michaelson, Ray (Palmer) Chair
 Gorn, Amy (Wasilla) Vice-Chair
 Zapata, Omaly (Anchorage) Sec.
 Backus, Stormi (Kenai)
 Barry, Connor (Soldotna)
 Blackwell, Jackson (Soldotna)
 Budd, Jeffrey (Sitka)
 Jeffery, Michael (Barrow)
 Kokrine, Beverly (Fairbanks)
 Manzie, Ernest (Fairbanks)
 Ogan, Laura (Anchorage)
 Overstreet, Michelle (Wasilla)
 Skultka, Charline (Anchorage)
 Stevenson, Austin (Soldotna)
 Zeman, Karen (Anchorage)

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Dear Governor,

It is with great pleasure that we present to you the 2018 Alaska Juvenile Justice Advisory Committee (AJJAC) annual report. As your appointed committee we work with the Division of Juvenile Justice to guide the state's compliance with the four core federal mandates through the Juvenile Justice Delinquency and Prevention Act, which was recently reauthorized by Congress. Some changes that have come along with the re-authorization are cited in this report.

In this era of increased focus on crime in the state of Alaska, AJJAC has been observing a downward trend in the Alaska juvenile crime rate over the past decade. While it is difficult to pinpoint a single factor contributing to this decline, AJJAC recognizes that it takes a mix of caring adults, effective DJJ programs and proper diagnostic and treatment methods to achieve such results.



Art work at the McLaughlin Youth Facility

Through our mission, AJJAC actively supports meaningful treatment, intervention and family supports for Alaska's youth. Examples of this support can range from advising DJJ on federal grant resources through the state funding plan, ensuring that DJJ uses evidence-based treatment methods and seeing that incarcerated youth are being housed in conditions which promote positive engagement with treatment. Youth facility environments across the state should be held to a high standard as these conditions reflect on the value we place on our most important natural resource, Alaskan youth!

The AJJAC membership hopes you find this annual publication informative and that it will give you an opportunity to reflect on the importance of providing the best rehabilitation and prevention opportunities for youth who come into contact with the Alaska juvenile justice system.

Sincerely,
Ray Michaelson
 AJJAC Chair



Mural at McLaughlin Youth Center

Mural in Bethel Youth Facility multi-purpose room



AJJAC's RECOMMENDATION

The AJJAC applauds the recently reauthorized and improved federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (JJDP) Act for it aligns with AJJAC's core values. Specifically, the purpose of the Act is now defined to *support the continuum of evidence based or promising programs that are **trauma informed**, reflect the science of **adolescent development** and are designed to meet the needs of at-risk youth and youth who come in contact with the justice system.*

Our recommendation is that the State of Alaska examine with DJJ its facilities and programs, in light of the JJDP Act's reformed purpose. AJJAC commends the progress of this past year, and encourages continued action for areas of improvement:

- The Division of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) and its Individual facilities have worked over time to create and implement therapeutic environments and programs. In traveling to Alaska's secure youth facilities to conduct focus groups for monitoring and compliance of the Act's core mandates. AJJAC sees first-hand examples of positive changes. This last year, AJJAC also witnessed a tremendous opportunity to improve a concerning physical environment and program structure at the Fairbanks Youth Facility. As stands, that facility does not currently meet AJJAC expectations for DJJ's therapeutic and restorative justice approach.
- AJJAC fully supports DJJ's expansion of proven trauma-informed practices. The pilot of a trauma-screening tool in Juneau gave staff tools and skills for best supporting incoming juveniles, and that tool will now be implemented statewide. Related to a recommendation from AJJAC last year, DJJ pursued and successfully received funding to improve services for youth who experience substance abuse problems and mental health diagnosis. This statewide initiative and collaborative system of reform is something AJJAC identified as needed to address the concerning trend of high-level offenses committed by young offenders.



Elders watch over at the Bethel Youth Facility

The mission of the DJJ is to hold juvenile offenders accountable for their behavior, promote the safety and restoration of victims and communities, and assist offenders and their families in developing skills to prevent future crime.



JJDP Act Four Core Mandates:

1. Deinstitutionalization of Status offenders
2. Sight and Sound Separation of Juvenile and Adult Offenders
3. Removal of Juveniles from Adult Jails and Lockups
4. Disproportionate Minority Contact in the Juvenile Justice System