

# WAYNE COUNTY, MI BLACK FAMILY DEVELOPMENT



An excerpt from YAP's Policy & Advocacy Center publication *Safely Home*

## ALTERNATIVE TO INCARCERATION & DETENTION

In 2013, the Michigan Council on Crime and Delinquency (MCCD) published the report, *There's No Place Like Home: making the case for wise investment in juvenile justice*, in which it discussed how Wayne County had shifted from a system that was state-controlled and focused on incarceration, to a local, self-sustained system based on rehabilitation and prevention. The local system included five managed care organizations that helped mobilize community-based services for juvenile justice-involved youth in an effort to keep them in the community and close to their families. One of those managed care organizations is Black Family Development, a youth-serving non-profit founded by African American social workers.

The geographic area that Black Family Development covers is Wayne County, with a particular focus on Juvenile Justice Services in nine zip codes on the east side of Detroit with the highest rate of youth crime in the County. The organization reaches 11,000 individuals and 2,700 families every year, including 1,500 youth diverted from court and 500 committed youth.

Black Family Development provides subgrants to community-based programs and to residential providers, although it favors keeping kids at home and with their families. Alice Thompson, the CEO of Black Family Development noted that "the community should be a partner to support the family. Children should be in the least restrictive setting and being with the parents in the least restrictive setting. When that is not possible the priority should be to find a way to reunite the family with their child."

Their approach, along with the other four managed care organizations, is working. In *There's No Place Like Home*, MCCD reported that out-of-home placements of youth in Wayne County decreased by 50% and the number of youth placed in state facilities was drastically reduced, from 731 youth in 1998 to only seven youth in 2012. Importantly, recidivism also declined from 56% in 1998 to 17.5% in 2012, and residential costs were cut by 42 million dollars.

To augment the individualized services youth get through the community-based programs, Black Family Development also drives an active community role in cultivating cultural education for youth, building community capacity, bridging relationships between police and families and reducing abuse of zero tolerance policies in school that put kids on the school-to-prison pipeline.



*Source: Interview with Alice Thompson, Executive Director of Black Family Development, February 2, 2014; Staley, K. & Weemhoff, M. (2013). There's no place like home: Making the case for wise investment in juvenile justice. Lansing, MI: Michigan Council on Crime and Delinquency.*