

## Webinar Details

**Title:** *Bridge Builders: Advancing Youth Restorative Justice Circles and Practices to Improve Law Enforcement-Youth Relations*

### Description

Police-youth interactions in the District of Columbia and Maryland have long been marked by challenges, particularly in communities of color. In D.C., Black youth represent nearly 90% of juvenile arrests, despite making up a smaller portion of the population (American Civil Liberties Union, 2020). Similarly, Maryland's juvenile justice system disproportionately impacts youth of color, with Black youth making up a significant percentage of those in detention. These statistics highlight systemic issues that erode trust between law enforcement and youth, especially in vulnerable communities.

Nonprofit organizations like the National Center for Children and Families (NCCF) play a critical role in addressing these disparities, providing services through programs like the Greentree Adolescent Program Residence and the FutureBound Transitional Housing Program. These programs serve youth often involved in the juvenile justice system or facing homelessness. NCCF integrates restorative justice (RJ) practices to foster healing and promote positive relationships between youth and law enforcement.

RJ promotes dialogue, empathy, and accountability, offering a transformative approach to repairing harm and building understanding. At NCCF, RJ is embedded in therapeutic art activities, where youth design murals to express themselves and restore their communities, and through youth advisory councils that elevate their voices in decision-making. Additionally, youth engage in therapeutic self-expression through poetry and hip-hop, which empower them and help heal trauma.

NCCF's collaborative approach includes community events co-facilitated by youth and law enforcement, where police officers and youth share meals, play sports, and attend local events together in a non-adversarial environment. These events promote mutual respect and understanding, with youth volunteering at community events, contributing positively to the community.

This workshop will examine how these RJ practices—used in NCCF's programs—have helped foster stronger, more productive relationships between youth and law enforcement, and how similar approaches can be adopted across the region.

### Learning Objectives and Takeaway Tools:

Participants will:

1. Understand Restorative Justice: Learn how RJ can create healing, accountability, and positive engagement between youth and law enforcement, with emphasis on programs like community service, youth advisory councils, and co-facilitated events.
2. Develop Practical Skills for Engaging with Youth: Gain tools to integrate RJ into their work, including facilitating restorative circles, supporting youth-led initiatives, and organizing community events with law enforcement and young people.

3. Access Real-World Tools for Implementation: Leave with templates for restorative circles, strategies for organizing RJ community events, and guidelines for fostering self-expression through art and poetry.
4. Learn Best Practices and Resources: Gain insights from NCCF's programs and other local RJ initiatives, with resources to implement RJ strategies in their communities.

### **Actionable strategies from the presentation that attendees can take back to their communities.**

Participants will leave with a toolkit of actionable RJ strategies that can be implemented in community, school, or juvenile justice settings. These include:

- Templates for facilitating restorative circles and community-building circles
- Guidance for launching youth advisory councils that center youth voice in decision-making
- Models for organizing collaborative events between youth and law enforcement to build trust in non-adversarial settings
- Tools for incorporating therapeutic self-expression (e.g., art, poetry, hip-hop) into RJ programming
- Sample protocols for volunteerism and youth-led community service projects that foster accountability and civic engagement

These strategies are designed to be adaptable across a variety of youth-serving contexts.

### **Biography:**

Omore Okhomina, MEd, Esq., CRCCPA, serves as NCCF's Administrator for Adolescent Programs, overseeing residential and school-based programs serving youth placed in out-of-home care or who are at risk. A Maryland Certified Residential Child Care Program Administrator, he also holds a master's in education and a Juris Doctor from the Howard University School of Law. He is a member of the DC Bar. Mr. Okhomina possesses a keen understanding of both educational and legal systems. With his extensive juvenile justice experience, he has provided child-centered intervention training to Corrections officers and youth workers in the juvenile justice setting. He mentors at-risk Black male youth in the community; possesses expertise in Black male youth engagement using qualitative evidence; and develops culturally competent, community-based, positive youth development interventions in numerous settings. With more than a decade of teaching experience in urban and inner-city classrooms, he has an exceptional commitment to transmitting knowledge of African American culture to Black male children, youth, and their families. He is the co-author of *Black Male Youth Raised in Public Systems: Engagement, Healing, Hope*.