

ARTS IN JUVENILE JUSTICE

BACKGROUND

In the Fiscal Year 2022, 2023, and 2024 Omnibus, Congress provided explicit direction to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) to “**continue to expand and advance Arts in Juvenile Justice demonstration program to provide competitive grants to partnerships between arts organizations and juvenile justice systems, programs, and nonprofit organizations, to pilot promising and effective art-based and art therapy models for youth at-risk of or engaged with the juvenile justice systems.**” Congress further directed OJJDP to establish the demonstration program with “**the advice and consultation from the National Endowment for the Arts and arts stakeholders.**”

HISTORY OF PRACTICE

Through a robust history of research and practice, arts-based programs have proven promising and effective at improving economic, social, and mental health outcomes for youth at risk or involved with the juvenile justice system. There are innumerable promising arts programs working with at-risk youth throughout the country, but more work is needed to expand these supportive programs and create a multisystem effort to ensure youth are empowered to live safe and fulfilling lives. In 2020, the Arts Education Partnership published two reports on expanding the arts across the juvenile justice system, citing strategies for effective programming and examples of programs operating across the country. [Engaging the Arts Across the Juvenile Justice System](#)¹ (Apr. 2020) explores research and programs that employ the arts along the juvenile justice continuum, including in prevention, intervention, transition, and healing. [Expanding the Arts Across the Juvenile Justice System](#)² (October, 2020) is a brief that builds on the prior report by capturing the insights and policy considerations that came out of a Thinkers Meeting with 11 experts in the arts education and juvenile justice fields.

Moreover, in May 2021, OJJDP updated its own literature review examining “[Arts-Based Programs and Arts Therapies for At-Risk, Justice-Involved, and Traumatized Youths.](#)” The review found that, “arts-based programs and arts therapies provide a unique way to help youths in times of transition and development... provid[ing] a nonthreatening, engaging way for children and adolescents to express their feelings, manage emotional and behavioral problems, express cultural awareness, cope with trauma and victimization, develop artistic talents and skills, and improve strengths and assets they already possess.” The OJJDP literature also calls for additional research and demonstrations to further identify how arts can directly affect the behavior of at-risk, justice-involved, and traumatized youths. A well-designed, implemented and evaluated Arts in JJ demonstration program will further existing evidence, uncover new promising practices, and prove efficacy of arts-based and art therapy models across the juvenile justice continuum.

FISCAL YEAR 2023 APPROPRIATIONS

The Cultural Advocacy Group respectfully requests \$117 million for Title V Delinquency Prevention Grants, **of which not less than \$5 million is directed to the newly established “Arts in Juvenile Justice” demonstration program** to further incorporate the arts into prevention, diversion, reentry, and secure detention juvenile justice programs.

Federal investment in the arts in juvenile justice prevention and intervention programs will:

- Support state and local efforts to invest in public-private partnerships between community-based arts organizations, law enforcement, probation and parole offices;
- Establish national benchmarks and metrics for evaluation of local and state juvenile justice systems utilizing the arts;
- Build evidentiary base of promising and effective art-based and art therapy practices and model programs; and

¹ Johnson, K. Pechota, D. (2020) *Engaging the Arts Across the Juvenile Justice System*. Arts Education Partnership. <https://www.ecs.org/expanding-the-arts-across-the-juvenile-justice-system/>

² Johnson, K. Pechota, D. (2020) *Engaging the Arts Across the Juvenile Justice System*. Arts Education Partnership. <https://www.ecs.org/expanding-the-arts-across-the-juvenile-justice-system/>

- Embrace a family-focused intervention model that includes health, education, housing, and employment guided by the arts and supported by Restorative Justice Principles and Practices and the National Center for Juvenile Justice Reform “credible messenger” strategy.

FUNDING HISTORY

	FY22 Enacted	FY23 Request
Title V	\$49,500,000	\$117,000,000
Arts in JJ Demo	TBD	(\$5,000,000)

Issue brief prepared by the Cultural Advocacy Group, a collaboration of arts and culture stakeholders working collectively to advance federal policy. Updated 2023.