

# Supporting Maryland in Building a More Equitable Juvenile Justice System

Juvenile Justice Reform Council Meeting December 17, 2019

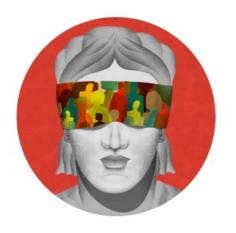
Krista Larson, Director – Center on Youth Justice Anton Robinson, Senior Planner

## Objectives for Today

- Introduce Vera and the Center on Youth Justice
- Discuss the support Vera will provide to the JJRC
- Understand which issue areas are "top of mind" for Council Members as we begin this process
- Discuss adolescent development as one core feature informing system change

#### Vera Institute of Justice

#### Vera is committed to:



**Securing Equal Justice** 



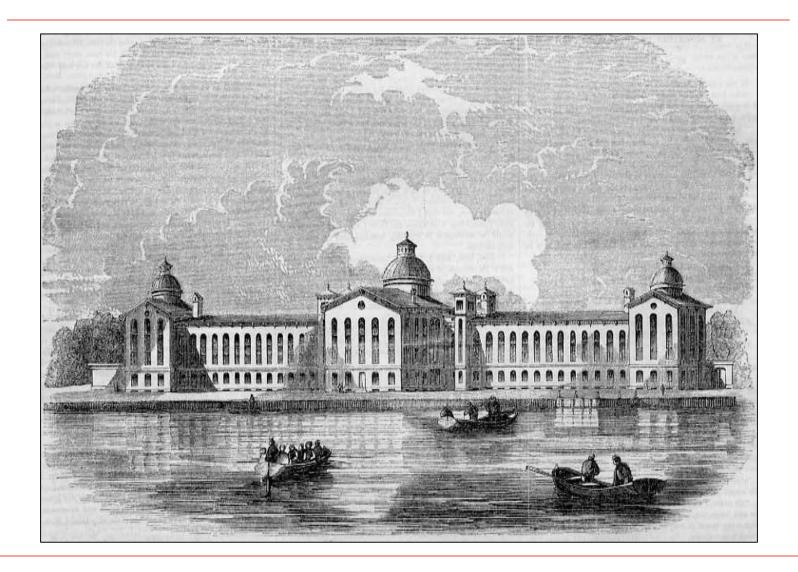
**Ending Mass** Incarceration



**Strengthening Families** and Communities

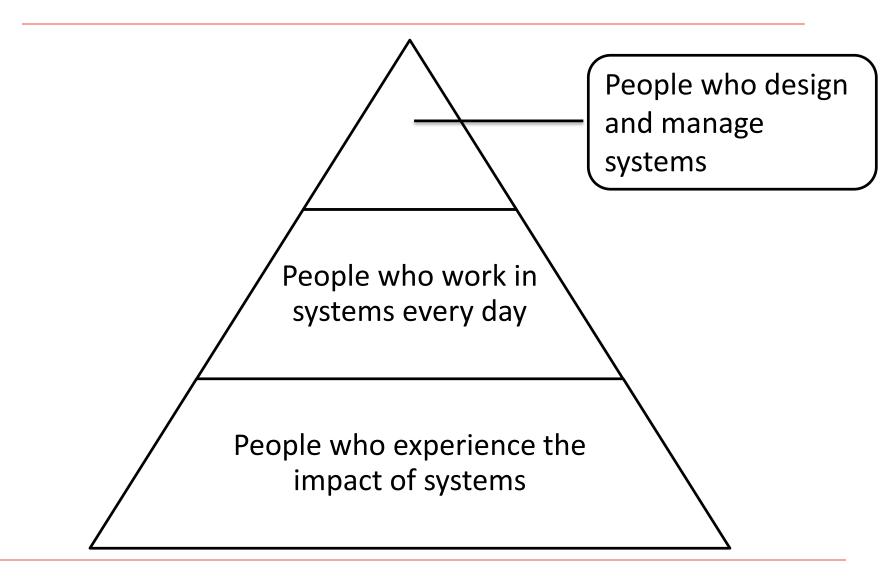


# The past informs the present





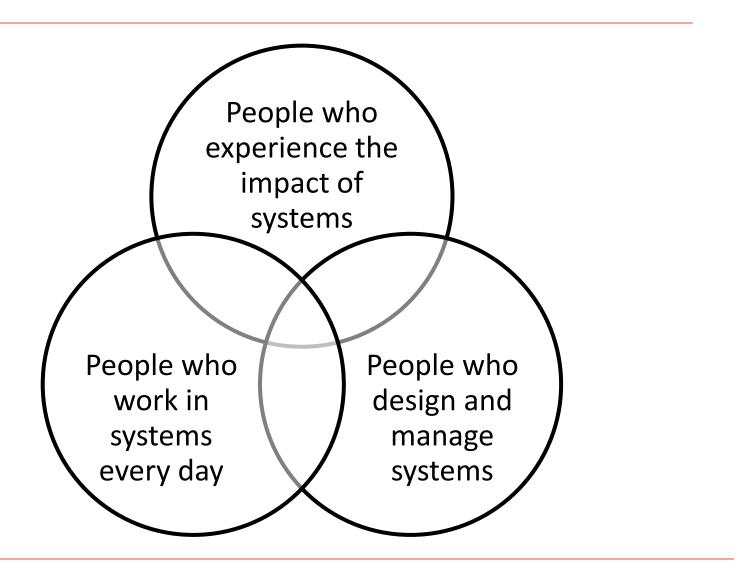
#### **Top-Down Expertise**





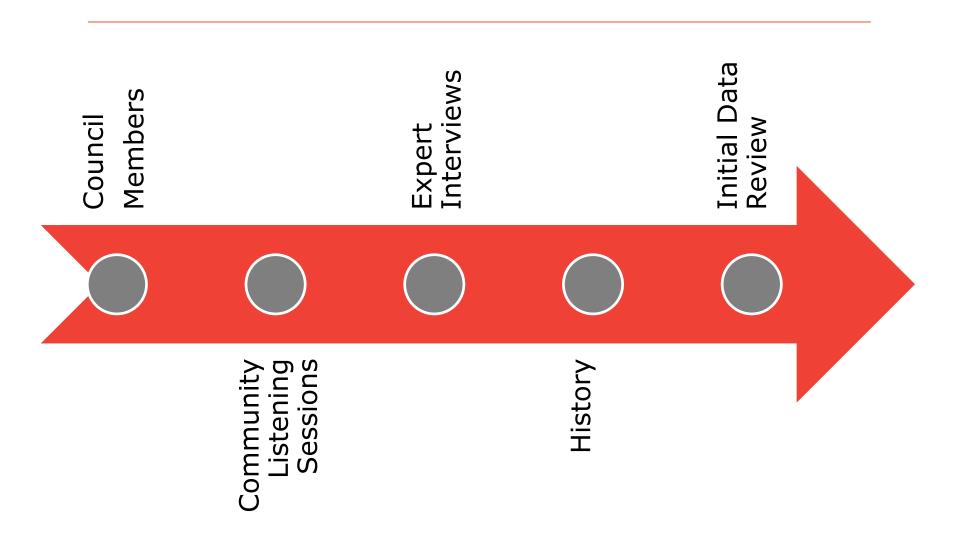


#### Complementary Expertise





## Setting Priority Areas / Framing the Inquiry



## Building Out the Analysis by Topic

- Data collaboration group
- Topical Interviews Local and National Experts
- Policy analysis with a race equity lens
- Collaborative research methods to capture the impact of the systems under discussion

#### Initial Inquiry will Frame the Remaining Process

- Topics will frame the meeting agendas from April onward
- Specific topics may lend themselves to working groups
- Briefing materials, Vera presentation, expert presentation, and discussion of policy proposals
- > Final drafted report

What's "Top of Mind" for Council Members?

Adolescent Development

#### The headline



The brains of young people are not fully mature at age 18, they continue to develop until at least the midtwenties.





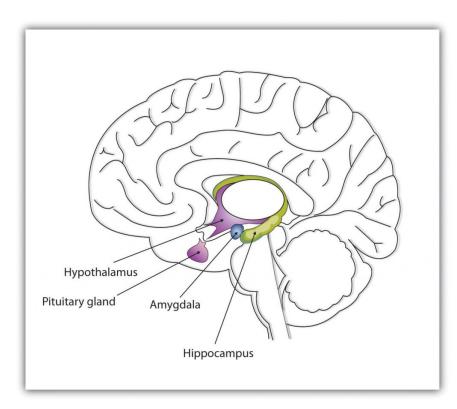
Adolescence rivals early childhood in the amount of change and development in the brain.

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Adolescence brings changes in the limbic system resulting in greater sensitivity to rewards, threats, novelty, and peers.

In contrast, it takes longer for the cortical region, which is implicated in cognitive control and selfregulation, to develop.



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#### Brain development during adolescence

"These changes in brain structure, function, and connectivity mark adolescence as a period of opportunity to discover new vistas, to form relationships with peers and adults, and to explore one's developing identity.

...Consequently, adolescent brains are not simply "advanced" child brains or "immature" adult brains, but have evolved to meet the needs of this stage of life."

- The Promise of Adolescence: Realizing Opportunity for All Youth (National Academy of Sciences, 2019)

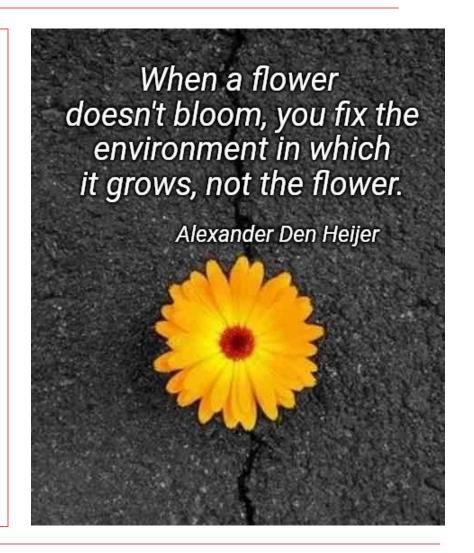


"Young man, go to your room and stay there until your cerebral cortex matures"

#### Their social context matters tremendously

Adolescents are **vulnerable**: they are affected by specifically toxic environments as well as pressures stemming from economic disadvantage and discrimination

Adolescents are responsive and resilient: investments and supports now can alter their life trajectory, even overcoming early adversity.



Thank you.

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