

Project Reset

Project Reset offers meaningful diversion opportunities to young adults at the point of arrest. The program seeks to create a proportionate response to low-level crime, holding young people accountable for their actions and connecting them with needed social services while avoiding the use of incarceration and the potential harms associated with standard case processing. The goal is to restore confidence in justice and bolster the legitimacy of law enforcement in the eyes of the public, helping to mend relations between the community and the justice system.

Concept

Every year, thousands of 16- and 17-year-olds in New York City are apprehended for low-level crimes. Police and prosecutors have traditionally had limited options for responding to these cases. They could either formally process these young people—which means arrest, prosecution, and in some cases, a jail sentence—or just let them off entirely. Instead, Project Reset offers a menu of robust alternatives designed to be restorative both for young people and their neighborhoods.

How It Works

Project Reset serves 16- and 17-year-olds who have been apprehended for low-level crimes, including drug possession, trespassing, and shoplifting, and who do not have a serious criminal record.

At the point of arrest, police alert young people they may be eligible for Project Reset. Prosecutors review each case in consultation with the defense bar. Participants in Project Reset who successfully complete a two-session restorative intervention will subsequently have their cases dismissed. These participants do not have to go to court and no record of their engagement with the justice system is retained.

Restorative interventions offered by Project Reset include counseling sessions, letters of apology,

community service, and group workshops with other teens.

Outcomes

Project Reset keeps participants out of jail and allows them to avoid the collateral consequences of a criminal record. The program reduces court traffic and shows communities that the justice system is responsive to public concern about the overuse of incarceration.

Project Reset was launched as a pilot program in Brownsville and Harlem in 2015. In the first six months of operation, 98 percent of participants successfully completed their restorative intervention and avoided formal case processing. The next step is to expand the program to other precincts and other populations of arrestees across New York City.

Partnership

Project Reset is a collaboration involving the Center for Court Innovation, New York City Police Department, the Brooklyn and Manhattan District Attorneys, the defense bar, and neighborhood groups.

For More Information

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