



# JUSTICE ADMINISTRATION DEPARTMENT

Advancing innovative justice solutions so that all Harris County residents can live in vibrant, safe, healthy, and thriving communities

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **The Harris County Justice Administration Department (JAD) Announces Intermediary for the Youth Justice Community Reinvestment Fund.**

*First of its kind in Texas, the Youth Justice Community Reinvestment Fund announces **Change Happens, Inc** as its Intermediary*

**HARRIS COUNTY– (May 5, 2022)** – How do you reduce the incarceration and detention of youth and in particular, young people of color in Harris County? Engaging in a pilot program, the **Youth Justice Community Reinvestment Fund**, that aims to shift the focus from locking up young people who may be at risk of getting into trouble with the law to investing in community solutions to prevent crime. The groundbreaking four-million-dollar, **Youth Justice Community Reinvestment Fund** was created by the **Harris County Commissioners Court** to reduce crime while addressing racial disparities in juvenile detention and is part of a bold new approach to justice that prioritizes investment in communities most impacted by juvenile justice referrals and detention.

The **Harris County Justice Administration Department (JAD)** sought organizations with youth justice expertise to apply to be the intermediary or “backbone organization” for the **Youth Justice Community Reinvestment Fund**. The intermediary will partner and contract with Harris County area grassroots organizations to work with the county to invest in community programs meant to prevent youth involvement in crime and youth incarceration.

Recently the Harris County Commissioners Court approved the non-profit organization, **[Change Happens, Inc.](#)**, to serve as the intermediary—or the “backbone organization”—for the **Youth Justice Community Reinvestment Fund**.

“Change Happens looks forward to working with local community partners who are committed to increasing their capacity, building evidence-based practices, and strengthening and expanding community resources in order to redirect young people away from the criminal justice system. This project expands opportunities to offer children at risk and justice-involved youth a better future,” **said Helen Stagg, Chief Executive Officer, Change Happens.**



A community reinvestment fund is a “teach a man to fish” model in which a backbone/intermediary nonprofit organization— with extensive experience in best practices— will award grants to grassroots direct service providers, and actively partner with them to strengthen their organizational capacity, improve the delivery of their services, and monitor whether their services are effectively assisting youth in the long term.

“We are looking forward to having Change Happens, Inc. as the intermediary for the Youth Justice Community Reinvestment Fund. They are committed to evidence-based practices that help redirect young people away from the juvenile justice system. Addressing the root causes associated with juvenile justice involvement is necessary to ensure that the young people in our communities grow into productive young adults, free from system involvement,” **said Henry Gonzales, Executive Director of the Harris County Juvenile Probation Department (JPD)**. “When possible, young people should remain in their community, maintain a connection with their family, and be supported by local, community-based services. To achieve this goal, those services need to be available to all community members regardless of geography. For that to happen, true community-based providers must have the necessary resources to accomplish that goal. Change Happens, Inc. and the Youth Justice Community Reinvestment Fund can help make this happen.”

This project has been a partnership between the community and Harris County since its inception last year. The intermediary will commence work to identify services needed in communities most impacted by juvenile justice. JAD and JPD will create an advisory board to work with the intermediary and Harris County to provide input on matters important to young people involved in the juvenile justice system. The intermediary will begin to solicit proposals from local grassroots service providers to provide direct services in the upcoming months.

“The Youth Justice Community Reinvestment Fund exemplifies the kind of public safety investment we need in Harris County—and across the country. For too long we’ve unjustly criminalized and incarcerated our young people, especially children of color, and we’re no safer for it. Instead of connecting at-risk kids to the prison pipeline, this Fund will connect them to the community-based resources and services they need to overcome obstacles and succeed. Investing in our youth makes our communities stronger— the Justice Administration Department, Juvenile Probation, Change Happens!, and all the community members involved in creating this Fund are helping to chart a new path that leads to safety, justice, and opportunity, “ **said Commissioner Rodney Ellis**.

**Commissioner Adrian Garcia added**, “Dealing with violent crime by deploying additional law enforcement as this Commissioners Court has repeatedly done is part of what needs to be done, but we should remain committed to finding ways to do what can be done to prevent crimes from ever happening. The Youth Justice Community Reinvestment Fund will work to deter kids from a life of crime before it starts. I am proud to support this important investment in our young people.”

**About the Youth Justice Community Reinvestment Fund:** The Reinvestment Fund comprises funds initially earmarked for juvenile probation and money from the county's General Fund. The Fund will invest in grassroots service providers based in neighborhoods most impacted by the juvenile justice system and employ staff who reflect the youth and families they serve. The Harris County Juvenile Probation Department, which has been a partner in this effort, is fully committed to this innovative approach.

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**About the Justice Administration Department:** The Justice Administration Department (JAD) was created by the Commissioners Court to act as a resource for all County Criminal and Juvenile Justice Agencies. The Department coordinates amongst stakeholders and provides the members of Commissioners Court, County Criminal and Youth Justice leaders policy research, data analysis, and solutions meant to increase public safety, fairness, equity, efficiency, and accountability throughout the Harris County justice system. For more information, visit <https://jad.harriscountytexas.gov>

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