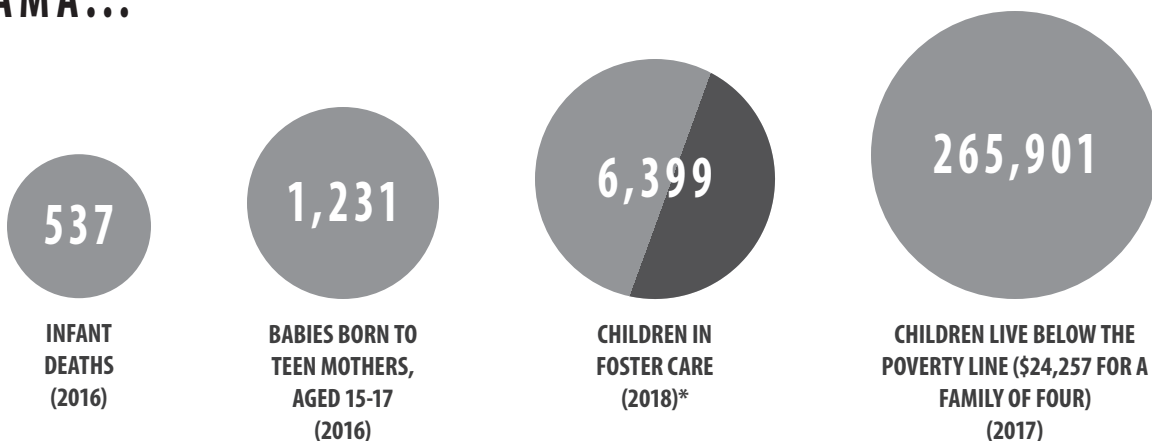# THE CRADLE TO PRISON PIPELINE

WHAT IS THE CRADLE TO PRISON PIPELINE?

- A trajectory that leads to marginalized lives, imprisonment and often premature death.
- Starts at birth and it is based primarily on access to preventive healthcare, the color of the baby's skin and the socio-economic status of the parents.
- This very costly tragedy – both in lives and funds – can no longer be disregarded.

IN ALABAMA...

537

INFANT
DEATHS
(2016)

1,231

BABIES BORN TO
TEEN MOTHERS,
AGED 15-17
(2016)

6,399

CHILDREN IN
FOSTER CARE
(2018)*

265,901

CHILDREN LIVE BELOW THE
POVERTY LINE ($24,257 FOR A
FAMILY OF FOUR)
(2017)

*28% INCREASE DUE TO NEGLECT AND ABUSE RELATED TO SUBSTANCE USE DISORDER

THE CRADLE

The greatest predictor of the health of a child is the health of the mother.

- Brain development and mental health begin before birth.
- The research shows that the biggest common denominator is poverty.
- **Early intervention with the mother and the child directly after birth is essential.**
  - Eighty-five (85) percent of the brain is developed by age 5
  - Nationally only 14 % of funds for public education is put into these early years
- Physical and mental developmental delays among young children are commonly left undiagnosed and often go untreated.
- Research on brain development continues to show why this period is crucial for future functioning.
  - Eighty (80) percent of children with a diagnosable anxiety disorder and 60 percent of children with diagnosable depression are not getting treatment
- **The best early interventions include:**
  1. A strong family/professional partnership
  2. Cultural competence (providers having: defined values, principles, behaviors, attitudes, policies, and structures that enable them to work effectively cross-culturally)
  3. Creating and implementing an Individual Family Plan

An increase in early childhood education, school-based mental health services and interactive after-school programs can offer children a greater chance at success. School-based mental health services are directly delivered to children in the school by a mental health professional with a team approach that includes school personnel and the child's family.

214,704	2,969	4,963
SCHOOL DAYS MISSED DUE TO SUSPENSION IN AL (2017)	**AL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS DROPPED OUT (2017)**	**CHILDREN UNDER AGE 18 ARRESTED FOR A CRIME IN AL (2017)**

THE PIPELINE TO PRISON

Learning at school includes many of the necessary life skills to function successfully as an adult. When students are suspended for infractions, they are usually sent back to the place of their trouble and unhappiness—their home environments or their neighborhoods, which can be filled with negative influences, where they can become hardened, confused, embittered.

- Students who are suspended may:
  - become stigmatized
  - fall behind in their studies
  - drop out of school
  - turn to crime and gangs
  - use drugs and develop substance abuse disorders
    - In Alabama, about fifty-five (55) percent of students, grades 9-12 reported using illicit drugs in 2015
- More than 25% of teens in America are impacted by at least mild symptoms of depression.
- A major depressive episode was reported in eleven (11) percent of Alabama adolescents in 2016.
- There are four predictive traits of a child committing a violent act; none of them are mental illness:
  1. Past violent or aggressive behaviors
  2. A "defeated" attitude, which results in poor self-esteem and originates from poor role models
  3. Poor school performance
  4. Impulsive/reactive personality style, which is an inborn trait, and can lead to violence when combined with a precipitating event

THE PIPELINE TO PRISON continued

Seventeen (17) percent of youth experience an emotional, mental, or behavioral disorder, with the most common mental health disorders in the juvenile justice system being:
- substance use disorder (most prevalent)
- disruptive behavior disorders
- anxiety disorders
- mood disorders such as major depression

The criminal justice system is the single biggest referral source for substance use agencies in America. Sixty (60) percent of youth in the criminal justice system meet the criteria for a substance use disorder.

Each year, more than two million young adults formally encounter the juvenile justice system in the U.S. The majority of these youth (65–70%) have at least one diagnosable mental health problem, and 20–25% have serious emotional problems.

1,084 YOUTH WERE IN THE CUSTODY OF THE ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH SERVICES IN 2018

ALABAMA SPENDS AN AVERAGE $220 PER DAY/PER STUDENT ON OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENT IN THE DYS SYSTEM

In Alabama, thousands of people who have mental illness and substance use disorders cycle through the criminal justice system each year.

THERE ARE 4,227 ALABAMA PRISON INMATES DIAGNOSED WITH A MENTAL IMPAIRMENT (2018)

ALABAMA SPENDS APPROXIMATELY $495 MILLION ANNUALLY ON INCARCERATION OF ADULTS

THERE WERE 20,271 INMATES IN ALABAMA PRISONS (2018)

WHAT CAN WE DO?

While it's easy to think the cradle to prison pipeline only impacts certain students and their respective families, our whole society feels the consequences.

By working together to use data to inform policy and funding responses, state and local leaders can support innovative collaboration that effectively improves outcomes and reduces future criminal justice involvement.

Our goal is to reduce detention and incarceration by increasing preventive supports and services to children in Alabama in need of them.

TACTICS

- **Ensure all children and pregnant women have access to affordable, seamless, comprehensive health coverage and services**

- **Ensure children in foster care and detention receive quality treatment to address their mental, behavioral and emotional needs**

- **At the earliest point of contact with the criminal justice system, redirect individuals with mental illness or severe emotional problems to drug courts or mental health courts that resemble pre-trial diversion**

- **All Alabama counties should join the Stepping Up Initiative, the community/regional partnership to decrease the number of individuals with mental illness in jails**

- **Ensure that all services are culturally and linguistically competent and appropriate**

- **Support proven early intervention models like the Nurse Family Partnership to increase maternal health and mental health care**

- **Educate and encourage parents to use screening tools to look for signs and symptoms of mental illness or substance abuse**

- **Expand infant and early childhood mental health strategies and practices to increase the quality and availability of evidence-based programs and integrate behavioral health services and supports for children and families**

- **Expand mental illness and substance abuse healthcare workforce through telepsychiatry in mental health centers, other related health facilities, county jails and state prisons**

TACTICS continued

- Expand peer support networks for children and adults through peer support certification and other peer training, support groups, drop-in centers and peer programs such as Wings Across Alabama, ROSS, COSA and CARESS

- Encourage training in Mental Health First Aid for parents, teachers, faith-based communities and anyone who works with the public.

- Expand Alabama's current School-based mental health services with access to a clinician in every school in the state

- Utilize proven and effective screening tools, such as the Student Risk Screening Scale, for threat assessments of risk factors for early identification of students

- Increase use of positive behavioral supports in schools for at-risk students, rather than suspensions

- Increase social skills training in childrens' groups

- Provide more tutoring in reading and math

- Expand summer academic and recreational programs to prevent summer learning loss

- Bring state and local elected officials and leaders together with parents to gain first-hand awareness of the status of their communities' children

- Establish policies that emphasize prevention and rehabilitation to keep children out of or rescue them from the Pipeline

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