

Using the Highway to Map the Decisions in your Youth Justice System

- Communities can **use the highway to create a race-conscious picture of the decisions** that drive young people toward or away from probation and confinement.
- Imagine the justice system as a **highway** that begins with delinquent behavior and leads directly to confinement.
- In reality, no system is that simple. As with any highway, there are multiple **exit ramps** along the way, each of which could create a path away from confinement and toward community-based opportunities for positive behavior change, personal growth and connection.
- Data from systems all over the country demonstrate that white youth have more access to exit ramps than youth of color. So as the remaining “traffic” flows to the end of the road, increasingly it is youth of color who are making the trip.
- Not all exits are permanent ones. As any driver knows, most highway exits have an **on-ramp** nearby that leads right back to the highway. For example, probation is itself an exit ramp, but because of how easy it is for young people on probation to violate probation conditions with small missteps, such as skipping school, missing a curfew or failing a drug test, they can be locked up for breaking rules, not breaking the law. **Youth of color are not only less likely to get off the highway at an exit, but are more likely to circle back via an on-ramp.**

Using the Highway

- The following slide is a customizable version of the highway described in [*Leading with Race to Reimagine Youth Justice: JDAI's Deep-End Initiative*](#).

The Probation Transformation Highway

Delinquency

Young person lives in a neighborhood that is not heavily policed, attends a school with no police, etc.

EXIT 1 →

Pre-Arrest Diversion by Police

← **EXIT 3**

→ **EXIT 2**

Police Warning

Arrest

Diversion by Prosecutor or Probation Intake

← **EXIT 5**

→ **EXIT 4**

Prosecutor Declines to File

Formal Prosecution

Court Orders Informal Track

← **EXIT 7**

→ **EXIT 6**

Probation Intake Chooses Informal Track

Formal charge →

Revocation →

← Formal

Adjudication

Supervised Probation

← **EXIT 9**

→ **EXIT 8**

Staffing process to design home-based disposition

← Placement Recommendation

Revocation →

Intensive Probation

← **EXIT 11**

→ **EXIT 10**

Probation with Program Participation

← Ejection/Revocation

Revocation →

Placement