

History of Involvement

In April 2002, the Juvenile Justice Center (JJC) at Suffolk University Law School settled its case with the MBTA Transit Police Department on behalf of eleven young plaintiffs claiming their state and federal civil rights had been violated by police officers' enforcement of a "zero tolerance" policy towards juveniles.

T police see the largest number of youth each day—about 50,000 in the morning and afternoon. Their presence in T stations is the source of concern for adult riders. Consequently, "getting it right" with teens is essential.

Since then, the MBTA Transit Police Department hired a new chief, Joseph C. Carter, formerly a 13 year superintendent for the Boston Police Department, and the chief of Oak Bluffs Police Department in Martha's Vineyard and the T police made an affirmative step in the direction of engaging youth and making arrest a choice of last resort.

One step in that direction has been the T Police Department's division into five transit policing service areas (TPSA's) and the creation of a "juvenile officer" who serves as a point person in each of these areas. The JJC has developed a resource guide to programs for youth and their families for each TPSA.

JJC Training Program

The JJC took a page from the Governor Romney's *Criminal Justice Innovations Final Report* (2004) which noted, "New training and professional development programs need to prepare all criminal justice personnel to be more analytic and to solve complex problems, to be effective communicators and listeners, aware of cultural differences, and to be able to understand utilize technology." The curriculum proposed here was developed by the JJC after several months of role playing exercises with the MBTA Police Department and youth.

In August 2004, the T Police have become the first site of the JJC's implementation of the *New Approaches to Officer-Youth Interaction* Project which provides officers with a two-day intensive primer on the youth they police. On the first day, officers review the T's policy regarding policing of youth, receive a primer in demographic data about Boston youth, and a synopsis of the legal issues surrounding the arrest of youth.

The second day is led by Dr. Jeffrey Bostic, Director of School Psychiatry at Massachusetts General Hospital. Dr. Bostic relies on the MacArthur Foundation's *Understanding Adolescents: A Juvenile Court Training Curriculum* available online at: www.abanet.org/crimjust/juvjus/macarthur.html. Dr. Bostic explains adolescent development and provides officers with strategies for working with youth effectively.

The two-day training uses a video created by Youth Rights Media, movies, surveys of youths' views of police, and ends with extensive role playing by police with youth from local programs. Adults who work extensively with city youth from Boston's community-based organizations participate in the role playing by discussing strategies that work effectively —i.e. with less confrontation—with youth.

Additionally, the JJC provides officers with two-hour seminars on areas or problems of specific concern to them in working with youth. The JJC works with adults who are experts in these areas to make presentations to officers and provide resources for dealing with them.

For more information about the trainings, please call Lisa Thureau-Gray at the JJC at 617-305-3200.