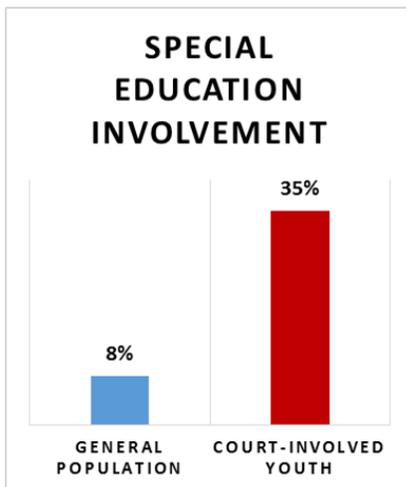


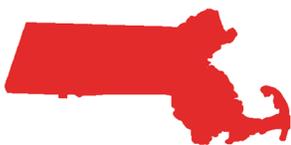
EDUCATION



Youth with learning disabilities have a **2-3 times** greater risk of coming into contact with the juvenile justice system



Students who are chronically absent are **3x** more prone to **violent behaviors**; **4x** more prone to **substance use**



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Court-involved youth come up against many more educational challenges than other students. Higher rates of behavioral and emotional disorders make them more susceptible to experiencing school discipline, suspension, and expulsion.¹ Youth with learning disabilities have a 2-3 times greater risk of exhibiting behavior that puts them in contact with the juvenile justice system, and are more likely to be arrested or drop out of school.² Furthermore, intensified school surveillance, security, and punishment following 'zero-tolerance' policies have increasingly shifted disciplinary action toward a crime control paradigm.³ Contact with the juvenile justice system takes time away from education, lowers the likelihood of graduating high school, and limits post-secondary education and employment opportunities.⁴

Special Education: Learning Disabilities and Emotional Disturbance

Court-involved youth require high quality educational services and supports to help them succeed. The effects of trauma often show up as academic difficulties such as lower test scores and grade point averages compared to those of youth in the general population.⁵ Youth in the juvenile justice system are disproportionately retained in a grade at the end of the school year, and many perform under grade level.⁶ Around 35% of youth in the juvenile justice system are involved in special education, in comparison to about 8% of youth in the general population. The two most common special education disabilities are specific learning disabilities and emotional disturbance. Combined with generally lower academic skills, this puts court-involved youth at risk for higher rates of delinquency and recidivism.⁷ Youth with learning disabilities are also more likely to suffer from poor impulse control, and to more frequently violate court orders. This puts them at significantly higher risk for deepened court involvement, and leads to their disproportionate representation among detained youth.⁸

Truancy

Truancy is the most common status offense processed in juvenile court. While truancy is a problem for many students, it disproportionately affects vulnerable children and adolescents, increasing their risk of delinquent behavior and juvenile justice system involvement. Risk factors common to justice-involved youth such as poverty, family dysfunction, violence, trauma, learning disabilities, and mental health difficulties all increase the likelihood of truancy.⁹ Truancy rates are at about 11% nationally, putting a significant number of school-aged children in contact with both academic and social and behavioral risk factors. One study found that students who are chronically absent are 3 times more likely to engage in violent behaviors and 4 times more likely to engage in substance use.¹⁰ In 2015, 67% of clients referred to Middlesex County's Juvenile Court Clinic had a history of truancy.¹¹

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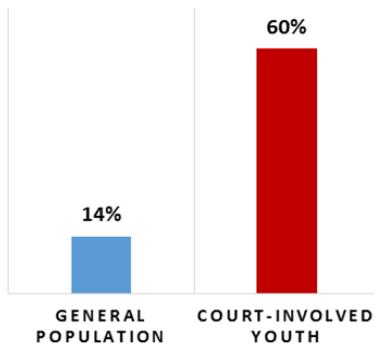
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EDUCATION

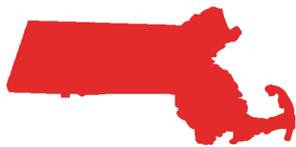


SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION RATES



Youth held in custody report **not being enrolled in school** at a rate **4X** greater than the general population

Zero-Tolerance policies contribute to high dropout rates, especially among students of color



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Suspension/Expulsion

School suspensions and expulsions have been on the rise since the 1990s as a result of the “get tough on crime” attitude that ushered in zero tolerance policies. However, contrary to the belief that these practices foster school safety, the increased use of suspension and expulsion has heightened the risk for student misbehavior, school dropout, and delayed graduation.¹² Suspension and expulsion are correlated with antisocial behavior including aggression, substance use, and higher rates of contact with the juvenile justice system, which in turn puts youth at greater risk for academic failure. In fact, evidence suggests that attending school during adolescence can be a protective factor against delinquent behavior.¹³ Over 60% of youth in the juvenile justice system reported being suspended or expelled, compared to about 14% of youth in the general population.¹⁴ Youth held in custody report not being enrolled in school at a rate 4 times greater than the general population.¹⁵ Research also points to a racial gap, whereby African American and Latino students are more likely to face severe school discipline such as suspension or expulsion, thus further contributing to the racial gap in academic success.¹⁶

The School-to-Prison Pipeline & Zero Tolerance

The school-to-prison pipeline refers to systemic factors that push vulnerable students away from academic success and into contact with the justice system.¹⁷ Zero-tolerance policies set predetermined consequences for offenses, most commonly removing students from school and/or involving the juvenile justice system in response to violence or substance use on school grounds. Such policies contribute to high dropout rates among harshly disciplined students, especially students of color.¹⁸ Schools need instead to develop more individually tailored responses to school discipline, thereby preserving the safety of schools while ensuring that the school is not contributing to a youth’s further involvement with the juvenile court.¹³



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