

# AVENUES FOR JUSTICE 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

**45 Years of Second Chances**





# ABOUT AVENUES FOR JUSTICE

Avenues for Justice (AFJ) is a NYC non-profit organization that has continued to provide free-post arrest support to at-risk young people for 45 years.

As one of the first Alternative-to-Incarceration programs for young people and young adults in the country, AFJ has protected NYC's court-involved and at-risk youth from incarceration, replacing cells with services.

AFJ provides free on-going court advocacy along with their HIRE UP online and onsite enrichment programs for workforce training, education, mental health and mentoring to over 500 young people, ages 13-24, each year.

On average, 94% of AFJ's court-involved Participants avoid reconviction within three years of enrollment into the program, making our alternative to incarceration (ATI) program one of the most successful, cost-effective models in the US.

## **AFJ operates programs for two main groups of Participants:**

- 1)** "Court-Involved" Participants who are in the criminal justice system; and
- 2)** "At-Risk" Participants who are at-risk of involvement with the criminal justice system.

Services for the Court-Involved and At-Risk programs are provided online and onsite at AFJ's two community centers in Harlem and the Lower East Side, and at AFJ's headquarters inside the Manhattan Criminal Courthouse.

Court-Involved Participants receive court advocacy services with intensive case management. All Participants receive HIRE UP services for job readiness and certification, teen empowerment and legal rights, life skills, mental and physical health wellness, academic support and tutoring.

AFJ also provides referrals to third party specialists for all Participants when needed.







# OUR IMPACT

## 517

Participants were served in 2023, exceeding our goal of 350.

## 94%

Percentage of Participants who avoid reconviction within three years of enrollment at AFJ.

## 257

Participants attended HIRE Up workshops.

“The impact that AFJ has had on my life cannot be expressed in words. This is why, after 25 years I continue to come back, give back, and share my story.”

**LUIS**  
AFJ Alumnus

“I give a lot of credit to be honest to Nelson, my court advocate. He was always there talk to me, calling me, telling me like hey John you got to do this; coaching me like a father. And that’s something that you can’t get no where else. It’s kinda like a family member. Not everyone treats strangers like family. Even though it’s his job, he makes it feel more like it’s his life. It made me feel special. It made me feel like I wanted to change, like I wanted to do better.”

**JOHN**  
AFJ Participant



# OUR IMPACT

## 60

Participants had their case dismissed, reduced, were adjudicated a youthful offender, or were conditionally discharged to AFJ in 2023

## 514

Digital literacy certifications earned by 67 Participants in 2023.

## 83

Certifications in OSHA-10, Scaffolding Safety-10, Flaggers, CPR and Food Handlers trainings in 2023.

## 60

Court-Involved Participants got a job in 2023.

“I rely on AFJ. If I have a kid under 20 who had no criminal involvement in the past, then has appeared with five cases in the last few months, I’ll talk to AFJ and have them talk to the kid and the family to develop a plan. I know AFJ will figure it out – and hold the kid accountable.”

**NYC JUDGE**

## 142

Participants Graduated the Program in 2023.





# AFJ community center Locations



Harlem Community Center  
69 East 130th Street  
2nd Floor  
New York, NY 10037



Robert Siegal Center  
100 Avenue B  
New York, NY 10009

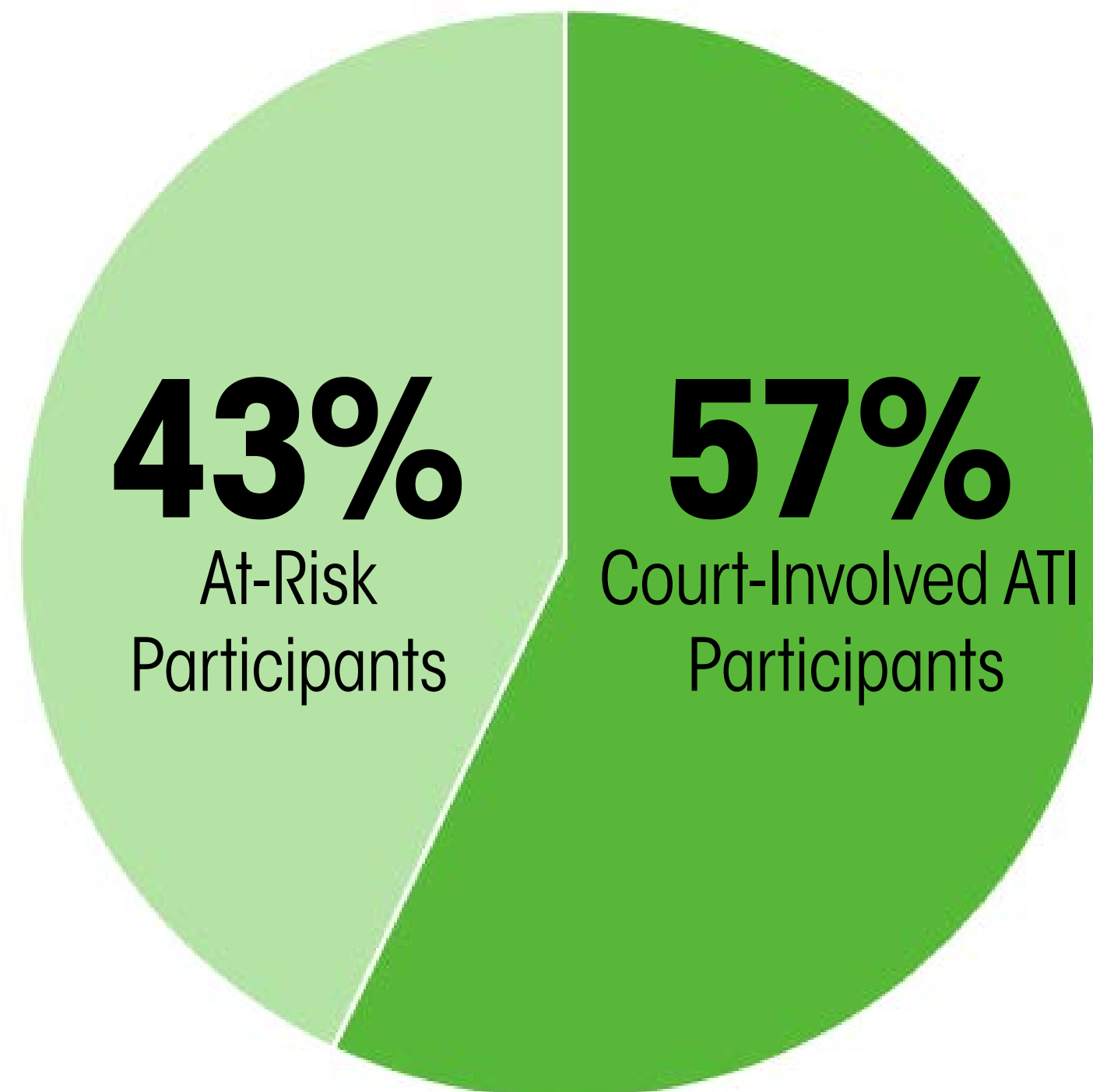


# OUR PARTICIPANTS

In 2023, AFJ served 517 ATI court-involved and at-risk Participants, ages 13 - 24, from across the city. These 517 young people participated in one of AFJ's two program areas:

296 (57%) were court-involved Participants enrolled in AFJ's intensive ATI program;

221 (43%) were at-risk Participants who participated in AFJ's crime prevention programs at our community centers;



[FOR MORE CLIENT DEMOGRAPHICS CLICK HERE!](#)



# OUR PARTICIPANTS

**ATI PARTICIPANTS:** AFJ's signature long-term ATI Participants who are court-involved. Services include court appearances, school visits, regular counseling, curfews, mandatory check-in at centers, and monitoring of individualized services (e.g., substance abuse programming, support services at community centers, and other mandated activities).

**DIVERSION PROGRAM:** Toward the end of 2020, AFJ began working with young people in the New York City Law Department's Family Court "Diversion" program. Young people assigned to the Family Court Diversion program are mandated to community-based Alternative to Incarceration (ATI) organizations, such as AFJ, for a specific number of sessions or workshops---typically 4 to 16. Diversion youth must also complete their mandate within a 60-day period. The program targets youth up to the age of 18. Diversion Participants receive the same services as other AFJ Participants but generally have a much shorter stay.

**RE-ENTRY PARTICIPANTS:** Starting in 2020, AFJ began to track court-involved young people who spend time in jails and prisons. These participants have all spent at least one night in jail.

In 2023, AFJ served 296 ATI court-involved 13 - 24 from across the city. These 296 Participants can be broken down into three categories:

98 (33%) were ATI court-involved Participants who did not spend time incarcerated or in the short-term diversion program;

133 (45%) were youth in Diversion Family Court who are offered the opportunity to have their case dismissed by the court if they comply with a short AFJ mandate;

65 (22%) were re-entry Participants who were referred to AFJ after spending a period of time incarcerated.





# EVIDENCE-BASED APPROACH

## EFFECTIVE ATI: Needed now more than ever.

Avenues for Justice's long history of success proves that providing support, skills and stability is far more effective at turning lives around than incarceration. Our organizational strength derives from seeing young people not as data points, but as people with real stories to tell about the importance of second chances—especially when empowered with the right services:

**INSTITUTIONAL TRUST:** With our headquarters based inside the Manhattan Criminal Courthouse, AFJ is well known in the NYC criminal justice system. Judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, probation officers, and court resource coordinators know we are reliable and effective. They refer Participants to us and we engage with them on juvenile justice reform;

**INDIVIDUAL ACTION PLANS:** Our Court Advocates create Individual Action Plans designed to address immediate and long-term needs and help Participants strive for personal and professional success. Our Participants are accountable to us and the court. If a Participant deviates from their individual plan, we will report it to the court while developing solutions to get them back on track. This helps the Participant cultivate a sense of personal responsibility and helps us maintain the court's trust.

**GUIDING FAMILIES:** AFJ addresses the needs of our Participants' families and supports them through emergencies which can place them in a crisis and derail the Participant's progress. We have seen that providing services to stabilize a Participant's home life can help the Participant successfully complete the program.

**COMPLETING COURT REQUIREMENTS:** AFJ provides free court advocacy until a Participant satisfies the court's requirements and receives a favorable disposition of their case. This could be a dismissal, pro-bation and/or a plea to a reduced charge or reduced sentencing without incarceration.

In some cases, records are sealed and the Participant receives Youthful Offender Status. Success is when, in addition to a favorable court outcome, our Participants complete the HIRE UP Program, graduate from school, go on to trade school or higher education, and/or enter gainful employment.

**LOW RECIDIVISM:** We track Participant recidivism rates for three-years and six-years from program enrollment. In 2021, AFJ initiated Participant and Alumni feedback surveys to document long term outcomes measured by non-criminal history and quality of life metrics supplemented by personal accounts.





# 2023 FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

AFJ maintains an annual budget a little above \$3 million. We keep our overhead low: **81% of the AFJ budget goes directly to support program.**

FOUNDATIONS GRANTS, CONTRIBUTIONS, & OTHERS	64%	\$1,665,550
INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTIONS	10%	\$242,445
SPECIAL EVENTS (NET)	14%	\$352,827
GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS & GRANTS	9%	\$235,407
INVESTMENT INCOME	2%	\$56,668
CORPORATE GRANT	1%	\$32,741
TOTAL REVENUE & PUBLIC SUPPORT	100%	\$2,585,638

[CLICK HERE FOR AFJ’S FINANCIAL STATEMENTS](#)

## RETURN ON INVESTMENT

\$6,300

The annual cost to put one young person through AFJ with a full year of our wraparound services.

VS.

\$500,000

The annual cost to New York taxpayers to incarcerate one young person. (NYC Comptroller)





# EDUCATION

**RECONNECTING WITH SCHOOL:** Court advocates help Participants re-enroll in school, and meet frequently with school administrators and teachers to ensure that Participants are succeeding at their studies and are on track to graduation.

**TUTORING:** Currently, Avenues for Justice maintains a bank of 65 volunteers, including tutors, who help AFJ Participants with schoolwork, exams and admissions forms to complete high school and advance to college.

**CORPORATE-LED WORKSHOPS:** Avenues for Justice relies on Corporate Partners to help facilitate our HIRE Up enrichment workshops for job readiness, digital and financial literacy. AFJ partners such as BlackRock, Island Capital Group, City National Bank and the New York Junior League have all led financial literacy and weekly HIRE Up job readiness workshops. Goldman Sachs created and led a one-week STEM bootcamp, while Slickdeals shared entrepreneurship tools with our Participants on how to develop products and helped them collectively create an online business.

**ADVANCING TO COLLEGE:** When Participants successfully obtain a diploma, Avenues for Justice works with them to enter college full or part-time. Assistance includes college visits, SAT-prep and help with applications and financial aid, as well as tutoring.







# HIRE UP: EMPLOYMENT TRAINING

In 2023, AFJ's HIRE UP program included a wide roster of job training and certification, educational support, teen empowerment and legal rights workshops, life skills and civics training, and mental and physical health wellness programs, both online and onsite at the Harlem and Lower East Side community centers.

Our research shows that our Participants need assistance to obtain long term employment--particularly in industries outside of retail and hospitality, which tend to have higher turnover rates and lack stability. It is for this very reason that AFJ tailored a unique approach to job readiness beyond the traditional resume and cover letter workshops. The goal of our HIRE UP program to make Participants more marketable and to successfully complete the program with professional hard and soft skills.



# HIRE UP: EMPLOYMENT TRAINING (CONT:)

**Certifications:** With the success of our certification programming in 2023, AFJ will now be offering OSHA Safety Education and Training program, along with the Flagger and Scaffold User Training, quarterly; alternating between centers.

Our CPR certifications will also be offered twice per year through our partnership with the New York Junior League (NYJL). Along with our certifications, AFJ continues to champion continued education through our mandatory Digital Literacy requirement for all our Participants. In an increasingly digital world, AFJ is determined to provide our Participants with the skills and tools needed to navigate technology for professional advancement.



## 2023 CERTIFICATIONS

514

Digital Literacy

20

CPR

40

Flaggers &  
Scaffolding

19

OSHA-30

4

Food Handlers





# PAID INTERNSHIPS

In addition to expanding our HIRE Up workforce readiness trainings, Avenues for Justice piloted a paid internship program, funded by AFJ, that paired Participants who passed the interview process with a local business that fit their personality and career goals. Each internship lasted for 8 weeks and a total of 125 hours paid at \$15 an hour.

Between our spring and fall cohort, we had 26 interns complete their internship at 20 different local businesses, majority BIPOC-owned, in different fields such as, yoga studios, restaurants, clothing stores, event spaces, and more.



# RECIDIVISM



**6%**

**OF AFJ PARTICIPANTS WERE RECONVICTED OF A CRIME  
WITHIN THREE YEARS OF ENROLLMENT IN OUR PROGRAM**

**VS.**

**76%**

**OF JUVENILE OFFENDERS WHO WERE RECONVICTED  
AFTER THREE YEARS OF RELEASE.**

**6%**

**76%**

■ AFJ Participants   ■ Juvenile Offenders Post-Release





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# OUR SUPPORTERS

## AVENUES FOR JUSTICE, INC. SUPPORTERS: JANUARY 2020 TO JANUARY 2024



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FIRST REPUBLIC BANK  
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HEARST FOUNDATIONS  
HELEN FRANKENTHALER FOUNDATION  
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THE ROGER AND ELENA MATTHEWS FAMILY  
MAYOR'S OFFICE OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE WITH THE CENTER FOR COMMUNITY ALTERNATIVES (CCA)  
MERRITT CHARITABLE FUND  
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THE MILLMAN AND SCHIFF FAMILY PHILANTHROPIC FUND  
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THE NBA FOUNDATION  
NBCU PROJECT INNOVATION  
NEW ROCHELLE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL  
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#STARTSMALL  
STEBBINS FUND  
TD CHARITABLE FOUNDATION  
TECH FORWARD  
THOMPSON FAMILY FOUNDATION  
TIGER FOUNDATION  
TRINITY CHURCH WALL STREET PHILANTHROPIES  
MICHAEL TUCH FOUNDATION  
UNITED WAY OF NEW YORK CITY/BLACK ENTERTAINMENT TELEVISION  
VLASSIS FAMILY CHARITABLE FOUNDATION  
PARKER WAICHMAN  
LEONARD & ROBERT WEINTRAUB FAMILY FOUNDATION  
WELLMET PHILANTHROPY  
WSGR FOUNDATION  
ZELL FAMILY FOUNDATION



# OUR TEAM

Avenues for Justice's Chair is African American, our Executive Director is Hispanic, and the management team is 100% African American. 83% of our Staff are African American and Hispanic, with two of our Court Advocates being successful program graduates. Avenues for Justice has twelve full-time staff members, supplemented by a bookkeeper, development consultant, and volunteers.

**ANGEL RODRIGUEZ**, CO-FOUNDER & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**ELIZABETH FREDERICK**, CHIEF OPERATING OFFICER

**GAMAL WILLIS**, DIRECTOR OF COURT ADVOCACY & OUTREACH

**JALIL ABDURRAHEEM**, COURT ADVOCATE

**SHANTEL BROOKS**, COURT ADVOCATE

**SAMANTHA FIKILINI**, PROGRAM & ACTIVITIES COORDINATOR

**ELSIE FLORES**, COURT ADVOCATE

**MALEKA LAWRENCE**, DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANT

**DAVID MOSLEY**, ACCOUNTANT & BOOKKEEPER

**WESTON MUENCH**, COMMUNICATIONS & DATA SPECIALIST

**JULIA PRICE**, COURT ADVOCATE

**BRIAN STANLEY**, COURT ADVOCATE

**EDISON TABORDA**, FACILITIES COORDINATOR

**NELSON VALENTINE**, SENIOR COURT ADVOCATE





# PARTICIPANT TESTIMONIAL

**JENNA:** It's not the type of program where you go through and it's over then you're done. It's the type of program where you're in it for life. The people at AFJ will help you with what you need, when you need it.

# PARENT TESTIMONIAL

**DOLORES:** I'm so thankful for having you AFJ since day one and I'm very thankful for everybody that has extended their hands for me and My family in the times of need. I'm trying to educate myself and my kids to help my family and help others as well. You guys are going to get tired of me saying thank you!!!!

# ALUMNUS TESTIMONIAL

**JULES FEBRE, GRADUATED 1997; Yoga Instructor, Berlin:** The intervention that AFJ provides may be one of the best ways to find a resolution, to bring a life back into a a clear perspective, to navigate to calmer waters. The the clear and decisive action taken by AFJ along with my family is what allowed me to really see the scale to which my life choices were impacting me in a negative and potentially enduring way. I am grateful for the work I was able to do at AFJ and credit them impacting my ability to be in the place I am today happy and healthy even in stormy waters.

# VOLUNTEER TESTIMONIAL

**NINA:** The Lower East Side Community Center really means so much to me. It felt as much like a home to me, as much as it does for the kids. There is nothing like face to face time at the center. I am so incredibly impressed and proud to have seen AFJ deal with the last year head on and continue to create a space and community for these kids.

# DONOR TESTIMONIAL

**JUDITH M LUKIN, Long-time Supporter:** I knew Bob Siegel just after he founded the (AFJ). For a while I worked for Angel Rodriguez, and helped raise funds for this organization. The two most important factors that make this valiant effort a success are (1) the staff are available to the young people around the clock (24/7) and (2) judges in the courts are willing to take the huge risk of placing a criminally charged young person with (AFJ), rather than to incarcerate, because they trust (AFJ).

If we had more programs this attentive and immediately responsive to the needs of our young people and their families, there would be significantly less need for jails and prisons, less need to incarcerate and stigmatize, and finally, we would understand what it takes to move public attitudes from punishment to providing care.







# SUPPORT AFJ TODAY!

**Contribute to Avenues For Justice and support one of the nation's most cost effective, successful crime-fighting programs.**

Help hundreds of young people get their second chance each year in Harlem, Lower EastSide, and throughout Manhattan.

**Donate online:**

[www.avenuesforjustice.org](http://www.avenuesforjustice.org)

**Donate by mail:**

Avenues For Justice  
100 Centre St, Room 1541  
New York, NY 10013

Please make your contribution payable to Avenues For Justice.

**Contact us at:**

**Avenues For Justice**

100 Centre Street, Room 1541  
New York, NY 10013  
P 212-349-6381  
[info@avenuesforjustice.org](mailto:info@avenuesforjustice.org)

**Photos by Marty Umans, Andrew Tivon and Tom Benedict**

# RESOURCES

## Our Program

## Blog Posts

## In The News

### COURTHOUSE OFFICE

100 Centre Street, Room 1541  
New York, NY 10013  
(212) 349-6381

### LES COMMUNITY CENTER

100 Avenue B  
New York, NY 10009  
(212) 505-5130

### HARLEM COMMUNITY CENTER

69 E 130th Street  
New York, NY 10035  
(212) 281-2202

