

SMART PROSECUTION

THE BROOKLYN YOUNG ADULT COURT: The Brooklyn Smart Prosecution Initiative

A comprehensive approach to young adult and adolescent justice

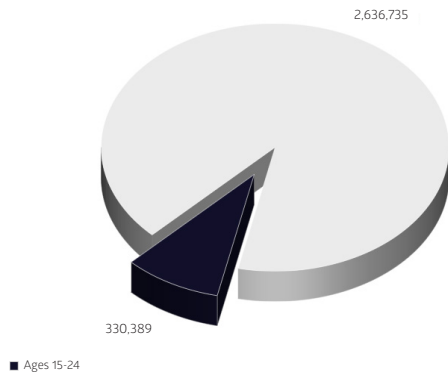


Chart 1: Kings County (Brooklyn, N.Y.), total population 2015 ([census.gov](https://www.census.gov)): 2,636,735
Population Ages 15-24: 330,389

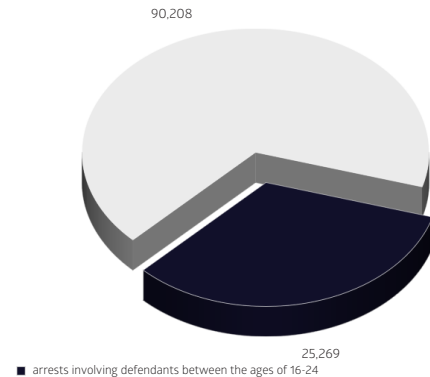


Chart 2: Number of arrests handled by Brooklyn DA, 2016: 90,208;
Number involving defendants between the ages of 16-24: 25,269

- Annual cost of incarcerating an inmate in New York City: \$247,000 ([source](#))
- Among adults who have been to state prison, those up to age 24 have the highest rates of reconviction within three years.

The Problem: Over-representation of youth in the New York City justice system

People between the ages of 16 and 24 are vastly over-represented in the New York City justice system. This is costly to the system and to individuals, as even a short stay in jail has been documented to significantly increase an individual's probability of future interactions with the criminal justice system. Along with this effect being compounded at a young age, young adults are particularly vulnerable to the damage caused by a criminal conviction,

which impacts their ability to find a job, complete their education, and maintain healthy relationships—all risk factors contributing to recidivism.

The Science: Young people are more impulsive but also more responsive to rehabilitation

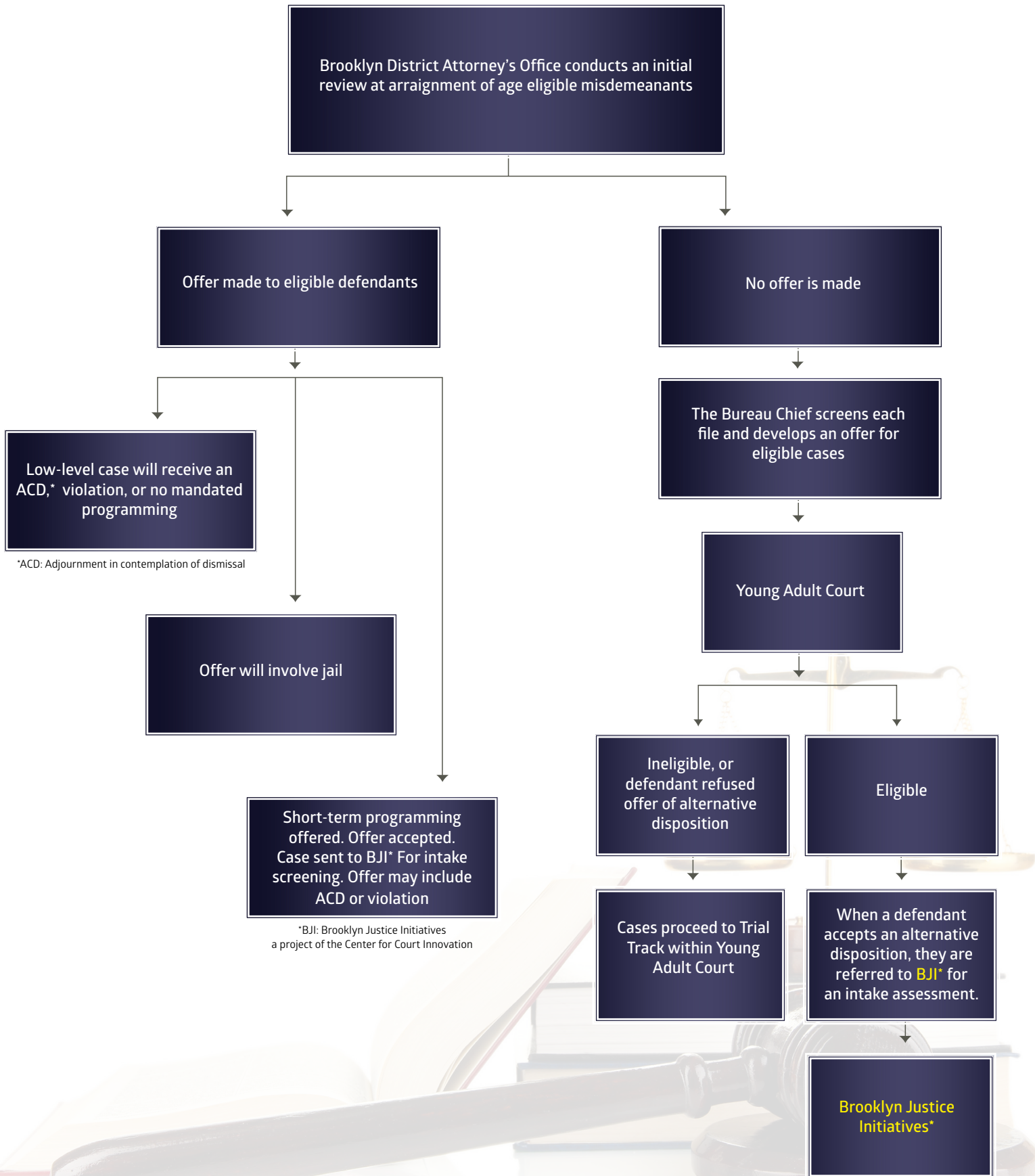
The latest science on adolescent and young adult brain development suggests decision-making and other psychosocial skills may not fully develop until well into adulthood. This makes young adults more prone to engage in impulsive, potentially criminal behavior. But that same formative state also makes young people more responsive to targeted attempts at rehabilitation.

The Response: Brooklyn Young Adult Court

In 2016, the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office, the New York State Office of Court Administration, the defense bar, and the Center for Court Innovation, launched the **Brooklyn Young Adult Court**, funded in part through a Smart Prosecution grant from the Bureau of Justice Assistance at the U.S. Department of Justice.

HOW IT WORKS

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*Flow Chart continues on next page

Brooklyn Justice Initiatives cont.



Assessment and Placement
After an assessment, BJI places defendants in programs—some of which are conducted on-site—and supervises their compliance



Referral
Referrals are made to 20 to 30 evidence-based programs vetted by the staff. The evidence-based programs range from short to long-term commitments.



Short-Term
·Employment readiness
·Conflict resolution
·Consultation with education opportunities liaison

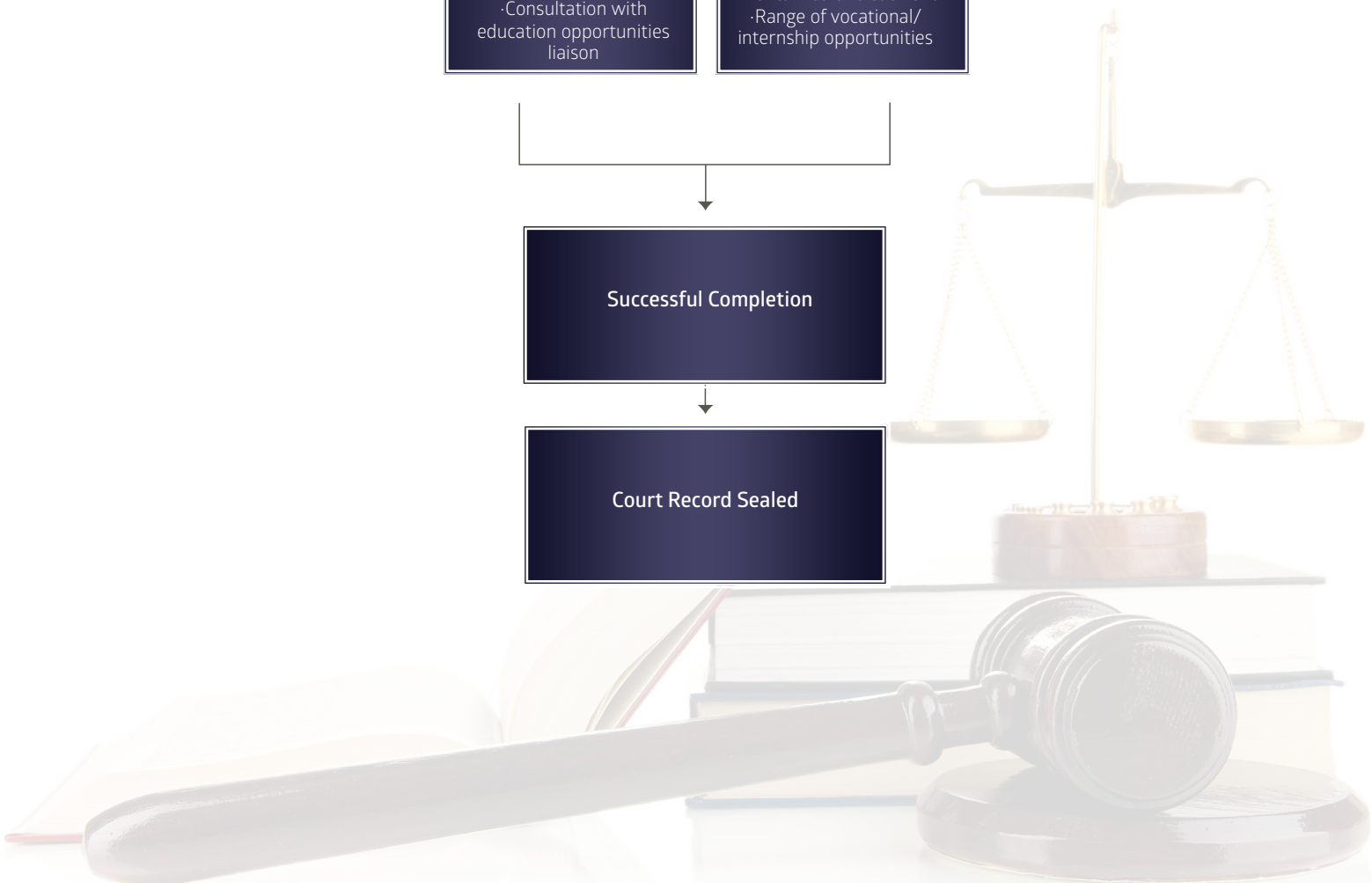
Long-Term
·Substance-use treatment
·Mental health treatment
·Range of vocational/ internship opportunities



Successful Completion



Court Record Sealed



Key Features

- Handles almost all misdemeanor cases of defendants between the ages of 16 and 24.
- Wherever possible, works to divert young people from incarceration and connect them with counseling and services validated to reduce the risk of future offending.

“It’s a new, individualized approach to prosecuting 16 to 24 year-olds.”

Bureau Chief Johanne Macajoux

Biggest Challenge: High Volume of Cases

The court hears up to 100 cases a day. The volume can make it difficult to give every defendant the individual attention required by the court’s mandate and can also lead to delays in linking defendants to meaningful services. One solution being considered is doing more prior to the first court appearance after arraignment. Pre-plea conferences between prosecutors and defense attorneys have begun taking place on a monthly basis as a way of moving defendants more quickly into services.

Lessons and Next Steps

The primary advice for any jurisdiction considering something like the Young Adult Court is to forge partnerships early. In the case of the Brooklyn District Attorney’s Office, that meant bringing on board the defense bar, the court, and partners such as community and criminal justice organizations. The Office also recommends starting with defendants charged with misdemeanors since a new approach with this population raises few concerns about public safety. Eventually, however, the Brooklyn court may consider including non-violent felonies.

“We see success stories in court every day.”

Shakiva Pierre,
Project Coordinator for the Young Adult Court

OUTCOMES March - December 2016

- Number of cases seen: 3,935
- Number of defendants diverted into services and alternatives to incarceration: 1,057
- Number of alternative evidence-based program options : 20-30

“It was a very humbling experience. I think it changed me. It made me a better person and made me handle my responsibilities better. I’m not going to commit the same mistakes.”

Young Adult Court participant