



PRESS RELEASE
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**Roca, Department of Juvenile Services Partner on a Brain-Science Focused
Approach to Young People at the Center of Urban Violence**

\$1 Million Grant Paves Way for Roca's Impact Institute to Lead Trainings of Community-based DJS Staff in Brain Science, Trauma, Cognitive Behavioral Skills Building; Provide Long-term Coaching

BALTIMORE, MD – Roca and the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services (DJS) today announced a unique joint initiative designed to accelerate juvenile justice transformation and emphasize models of violence prevention that focuses on adolescent brain science, the impact of trauma, and Roca's unique Rewire cognitive behavioral theory as a community-based intervention. Through a grant of more than \$996,000, youth under DJS supervision will learn skills for emotional regulation and healthy decision-making and ultimately promote successful leaders in the community.

Through the partnership with Roca's Impact Institute, DJS will expand upon its current agency-wide reform agenda to complete an intensive planning process that includes the use of data and review and restructure of community-based services, ensuring that services are best aligned with the pressing needs of the highest-risk young people and allowing probation staff to deliver interventions that are research-based, trauma-informed, and aligned to the developmental needs of young people in their care.

"DJS is building on our existing efforts to advance equity for our young people while at the same time focusing on rehabilitation, reaching our highest risk youth where they are developmentally and behaviorally, acknowledging and working through the severe and sustained trauma they face, and engaging them in meaningful behavior change," said DJS Deputy Secretary of Community Operations Betsy Tolentino. "Roca has shown in its work throughout Baltimore and with other system partners that change is possible, and the impact of that change is helping to save lives and make a positive difference on our streets."

Under the partnership, DJS and the Roca Impact Institute will provide 300 DJS staff with:

- Training in adolescent brain science and the impact of trauma;
- Training on cognitive behavioral theory (CBT) using Rewire by Roca – CBT Skills for Living (Rewire CBT)
- Long-term coaching and support to all community-based staff to incorporate brain science, the stages of change and Rewire CBT into all aspects of their work with young people.

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“In order to reduce violence in Baltimore and throughout the State of Maryland, we need to change our approach to the young people at the center of that violence, who have been through immense trauma,” said Molly Baldwin, Founder and CEO of Roca. “DJS has been a critical partner to Roca Baltimore and we are excited to expand this work across the State. This partnership will fundamentally transform a typically incarceration-focused approach to youth violence.

Rewire CBT was designed specifically to be delivered by non-clinical staff in contact with those young people most at risk of violence and criminal behaviors. Developed in partnership with Massachusetts General Hospital, Rewire CBT can be taught, practiced, and mastered in the street or in community settings. It was designed to overcome traditional barriers to access, helping front-line staff reach high-risk young people who tend to refuse interventions in clinical settings. Roca’s Rewire CBT, equips front-line staff in the highest contact with the most at-risk you with the tools to teach and help young people practice the skills necessary for emotional regulation and healthy decision-making.

“Roca is honored to partner with DJS in this critical work as a partner in working toward systems change which helps support the young people we serve,” added Baldwin. “The Roca Impact Institute, our training and coaching arm, has been able to work with partners in government, law enforcement, and on the streets to help DJS do their incredibly important work with young people in Maryland.”

Roca has made brain science and Rewire CBT a part of its work with high-risk young people in Baltimore, in several cities in Massachusetts, and in Hartford, Connecticut. In 2021, Roca served 240 young men in Baltimore. More than 80 percent of participants actively practiced and applied our CBT, which helped more than 4 out of 5 participants in this group realize measurable improvements in their behavioral health. Nearly 90 percent of them participated in educational, vocational, life skills, or transitional employment programming. And, among those enrolled in the program for two or more years, more than 84 percent had no new arrests.

The Roca Impact Institute is training and coaching thousands of people across the country engaged in the fields of violence intervention and criminal justice, including work in the states of California, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Maryland, and New York.

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