

Tyrell's Story (2024)

We first met "Tyrell" as a high school senior struggling with his mental health and disconnected from school. He had been arrested for stealing his uncle's car and crashing it into a tree. Thankfully, no one was hurt. Against his uncle's wishes, Tyrell was charged with unauthorized use of a motor vehicle. His uncle wanted Tyrell to be held accountable, but he was terrified of the impacts that incarceration would have on the teen's mental health; Tyrell had previously been hospitalized for depression. Prison can have horrible effects on children's mental health and can often worsen pre-existing struggles by interrupting a child's social development and education. Tyrell needed help.



LCCR immediately got to work. When we first met with him, it was difficult for Tyrell to open up. For too long, he fell back on his anger and depression to keep people from getting too close. He was often defensive and reluctant to share his feelings. Eventually, he expressed that he wanted to go back to school, and to have someone truly listen to him. Based on what Tyrell wanted for his life, we collaborated with him to create the plan that led to his release.

Now back home in his community, Tyrell's LCCR youth advocate, Cherrice, took the lead on facilitating his return to school. She guided him through every step of the registration process. With support from his uncle and his LCCR team, Tyrell graduated from high school on time this past May— a huge achievement.

Cherrice also worked with Tyrell to help him better manage his mental health. She began by administering a mental health assessment to determine his needs and how to best address them. She then connected Tyrell with a clinic that would get him the counseling and medication care he needed to treat his depression.

Tyrell's next goal was to begin community college. He applied and had been accepted, but he was unsure how to navigate the complex process of course registration and tuition payments. On the verge of being dropped from the roles due to unpaid tuition, Cherrice stepped in to provide the guidance he needed. She went with Tyrell to his school and helped him sort out his payments and his class schedule, and even researched scholarships for him. Together, they completed the applications, and Tyrell was awarded additional financial aid to ease the cost of his education.

Tyrell is a sweet kid who has really worked hard to improve his life and mental health. He is now attending college full-time with the support of his uncle, who is astounded by how far he has come. Tyrell recently shared how much happier he feels now with where his life is headed. He also hasn't had any new arrests. If all continues to go well, his juvenile court case should close out later this year.

Your support makes our success with Tyrell and kids like him possible. Thank you.

Amira's Story (2025)

We first met "Amira" as a high school senior arrested for simple battery. At the moment of her arrest, Amira had already endured more hardship than most people face in a lifetime.

Amira's childhood was marked by abuse, death, and family imprisonment. As a result, she spent most of her childhood in foster care. The instability of her early years left deep scars, and she struggled with depression and anger. Despite her efforts, she hadn't been able to finish high school and had sought help at a hospital for her mental health.

After her arrest, Amira was faced with compounding challenges. While navigating her court case, she aged out of the foster care system, leaving her homeless and without a safety net. Concerned for her safety but without a real solution, the judge overseeing her case ordered Amira to be held in jail until a plan could be developed. That's when her LCCR attorney, Kayla, stepped in to create a release plan to get Amira out of jail and into a shelter.



Upon her release, Amira was placed in one of the few homeless shelters in the city. However, the conditions there were far from ideal for a young girl. One of the terms of her release included wearing an ankle monitor and staying at the shelter, but she was being harassed while living there. Feeling trapped and unsafe, Amira made the difficult decision to leave, knowing it would violate her release conditions and risk her own reincarceration.

Without family to support her and no other available shelters, Amira became increasingly vulnerable. Her LCCR team noticed warning signs that Amira was being trafficked. She was moving between homes, staying with different people every week, and could only be reached through someone else's phone. To make matters worse, her ankle monitor alerted authorities that she had left the shelter, leading to a warrant for her arrest.

Kayla and the rest of Amira's team knew she needed help fast. Kayla reached out to a friend who had been through what Amira was struggling with, arranging for the two to talk. After their conversation, Amira saw a glimpse of the life she wanted—a life where she could be safe and independent. Kayla then reached out to a women-only shelter specializing in supporting survivors of violence. They secured a spot for Amira the very next day. The following morning, Amira met with Kayla and her LCCR youth advocate, Curry, to complete her admission paperwork. For the first time in a long while, Amira had a safe place to recover and heal.

Since moving into the shelter, Amira has made remarkable progress. She enrolled in a HiSET program to finish her education, started working with Curry to apply for jobs, and is participating in group therapy to address her mental health. She's also taking financial literacy classes to prepare for her future. Her team is optimistic that her juvenile case will close next month, freeing her to focus entirely on building the life she wants.

Amira's story underscores the harm the juvenile legal system can inflict on young people who need compassion and support, not surveillance and incarceration. The courts often defer to "protecting" girls by prolonging their legal system involvement. The measures imposed on Amira—imprisonment for her "safety" and requiring an ankle monitor despite her homelessness—did nothing to protect her. Instead, it left her more vulnerable to exploitation and could have had dangerous consequences.

Amira is a determined young woman who radiates positivity. She has always stood up for what is right and fought to protect others, even when it came at great personal cost. With the support of her team, Amira is creating the life she deserves. We are excited to see what she will achieve.

Your support makes our success with Amira and kids like her possible. Thank you.

Emmett's Story (2024)

We first met "Emmett" as a 12th grader shortly after his arrest at school for having a small amount of marijuana on him. As if an arrest for simple misbehavior weren't destabilizing enough, his school was also pushing for expulsion.

Students and their families have the right to an attorney during an expulsion hearing—a fact that not every parent knows. The work of education lawyers, like Emmett's LCCR attorney, Remi, is critically important to ensuring that these hearings are fair and follow the rules. Otherwise, children can be unfairly pushed out of school.

Remi went with Emmett and his family to his expulsion hearing. There, the school focused less on Emmett's well-being and more on the minor allegation against him. While Emmett's family tried their best to advocate on his behalf, nobody listened to them. Emmett's father, his biggest supporter, was so distraught he walked out of the hearing. And in the end, Emmett was expelled.

Emmett was stunned. He is a good student—he had never gotten in any kind of trouble before and was doing well in all his classes. He couldn't understand why his school was trying to throw him away.



The way Emmett's school responded to his mistake was disappointing and damaging—but not unusual. There's a startling disparity in how teen misbehavior is dealt with in schools with a whiter population versus those that are predominantly Black. Students in the former typically receive the benefit of age-appropriate accountability: call home to parents, after-school detention, not being allowed to go to a school dance. Black students, on the other hand, are significantly more likely to be suspended, expelled, and/or arrested for the very same misbehavior.

When the decision was handed down, Emmett's family panicked. If Emmett's expulsion stood, he would be forced to attend an alternative school on the East Bank, far from where the family lives. Worse, the alternative school doesn't offer bussing, meaning Emmett would have had to navigate public transit on his own.

Emmett really wanted to stay at *his* school. Like every child, he wanted to be with his friends, in his classes, participating in his extracurriculars. Emmett also has a great deal of school pride—even after his school moved to expel him. He would meet with our staff frequently decked out in his school polo and sweatshirt, even outside of school hours when he didn't have to.

Remi moved to appeal Emmett's expulsion to a more senior school board member, explaining that because Emmett's school had circumvented the rules dictating how and when expulsion hearings can take place, the legitimacy of the whole hearing was at stake. After all, even if an expulsion hearing isn't held in a court, every child still has the right to a fair hearing.

While awaiting the results of the appeal, Emmett's LCCR team maintained close contact with him and his family, talking to them regularly to make sure they were doing okay. Throughout the duration of the process, Emmett remained suspended from school. We checked in to ensure he was completing all the work he was assigned at home.

After an exhaustive appeal process, Emmett's expulsion was overturned. He's back in school, where he hasn't had any new trouble. And because this was his first arrest, his court case was referred to diversion, a community-based alternative to incarceration program geared toward low-risk youth. His case is now headed toward closure.

Emmett is once again set to graduate in May and is already preparing for college in the fall. And now, when he wears his school clothes, he can do so with pride again.

Your support makes our success with Emmett and kids like him possible. Thank you.