



THE WORLD
IS WATCHING,
YOUR SILENCE
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COMPLICITY
#BLM

ANNUAL REPORT 2020



**THE
SENTENCING
PROJECT**

RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY FOR REFORM

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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

This past year was like no other in our lifetimes: the emergence of a global pandemic that continues to kill thousands of our people; a historic election tested the fabric of our democracy; and a national reckoning on police and state violence exposed the deep racism in America that persists in dividing and hurting our people.

As I reflect on 2020 and my first six months with The Sentencing Project, I am struck by the incredible resilience, perseverance and dedication of our staff, the people we serve, and our friends and supporters across the country.

The Sentencing Project met the challenges before us by promoting effective and humane responses to crime that minimize imprisonment and criminalization of youth and adults while advancing racial justice. Our work in 2020 focused on three key areas:

1. Rolling back extreme sentences to end mass incarceration, with an acute focus on releasing elderly people, youth and others vulnerable to COVID-19
2. Expanding voting rights and ending the role of the criminal legal system in determining who can choose our country's leaders
3. Safeguarding the health and rights of young people caught up in the justice system

Racial justice is the primary concern and thread throughout all aspects of this work. We know that

ending both mass incarceration and the cruelty and ineffectiveness of our current system cannot be done without addressing the rampant racism that supports it.

This racism is costing lives – even more so during the pandemic. The Sentencing Project responded to this crisis by working tirelessly to ensure that relief provided by the Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act included help for incarcerated people. We also organized with advocates in states across the U.S. to push for the safe release of vulnerable people and the reduction of correction populations writ large. At the same time, starting in March 2020, we tracked COVID-19 infection rates in youth detention settings nationwide to hold jurisdictions accountable for protecting kids and sending them home safely.

Our work continues and we are grateful for the ongoing support of all our allies and supporters in the struggle **against** racism and **for** a justice system that will finally be just for ALL.



Onwards in 2021!

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Amy Fettig". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Amy Fettig
Executive Director

CAMPAIGN TO END LIFE IMPRISONMENT

The Sentencing Project is committed to ending extreme punishment by abolishing life without parole and capping sentences at 20 years. Working with partners across the country we are advancing our goal, and in 2020 we had our biggest victory yet.

After a two-year legislative push by The Sentencing Project and partners with the Thrive Under 25 Coalition, Washington, DC lawmakers extended sentencing reviews to people who have served at least 15 years and committed their offense while under the age of 25. Over 500 people are expected to be eligible for consideration. The Sentencing Project first called on the DC Council in 2017 to offer this opportunity to more people serving long sentences. In testimony, The Sentencing Project pointed to conclusive research indicating that full brain development, including impulse control, managing peer influences and mature decision making, was not achieved until about age 25, and therefore this cohort of individuals, in particular, should be considered for sentence reductions.

The Second Look Amendment Act, championed by Councilmember Charles Allen, earned over-

whelming support from the Council, Attorney General Karl Racine, and activists, including individuals recently released from prison under an earlier version of the DC law that offers sentencing reviews to people who committed their offense while under the age of 18. Over 200 people and organizations, including The Sentencing Project, testified in favor of the legislation. Thousands of DC residents signed a petition we promoted to support the reform as well.

While strong opposition from the Trump-appointed U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia, who prosecutes felony cases in DC, and the *Washington Post* editorial board threatened to derail the legislation in late 2019, The Sentencing Project worked to counter their inaccurate presentations and assumptions about recidivism among people serving extreme sentences in opinion pieces and research briefs.



The Sentencing Project will build upon this success by supporting efforts to extend a second look to all incarcerated DC residents, regardless of age, serving sentences over 10 years. We are also bringing this success and momentum to nationwide efforts to roll back the extreme, outdated, racist, and inhumane sentencing practices of the last 40 years of mass incarceration.

Image: Kareem McCraney, a recipient of DC's 2016 second look reform, greets his mother after serving 22 years in prison. Photo courtesy of Unchained Stories.

PROTECTING THE UNIVERSAL RIGHT TO VOTE



Image: Tony Lewis, Sr. with his granddaughters. Mr. Lewis is one of 4,000 incarcerated D.C. citizens that had their voting rights restored under the Restore the Vote Act of 2020.

“Voting would make me feel like a citizen again.

I want people in power who care about public safety, good schools, affordable housing, jobs, and sentencing reform for my two granddaughters in Washington, DC.”

— Tony Lewis, Sr.

DC citizen serving a life sentence in federal prison

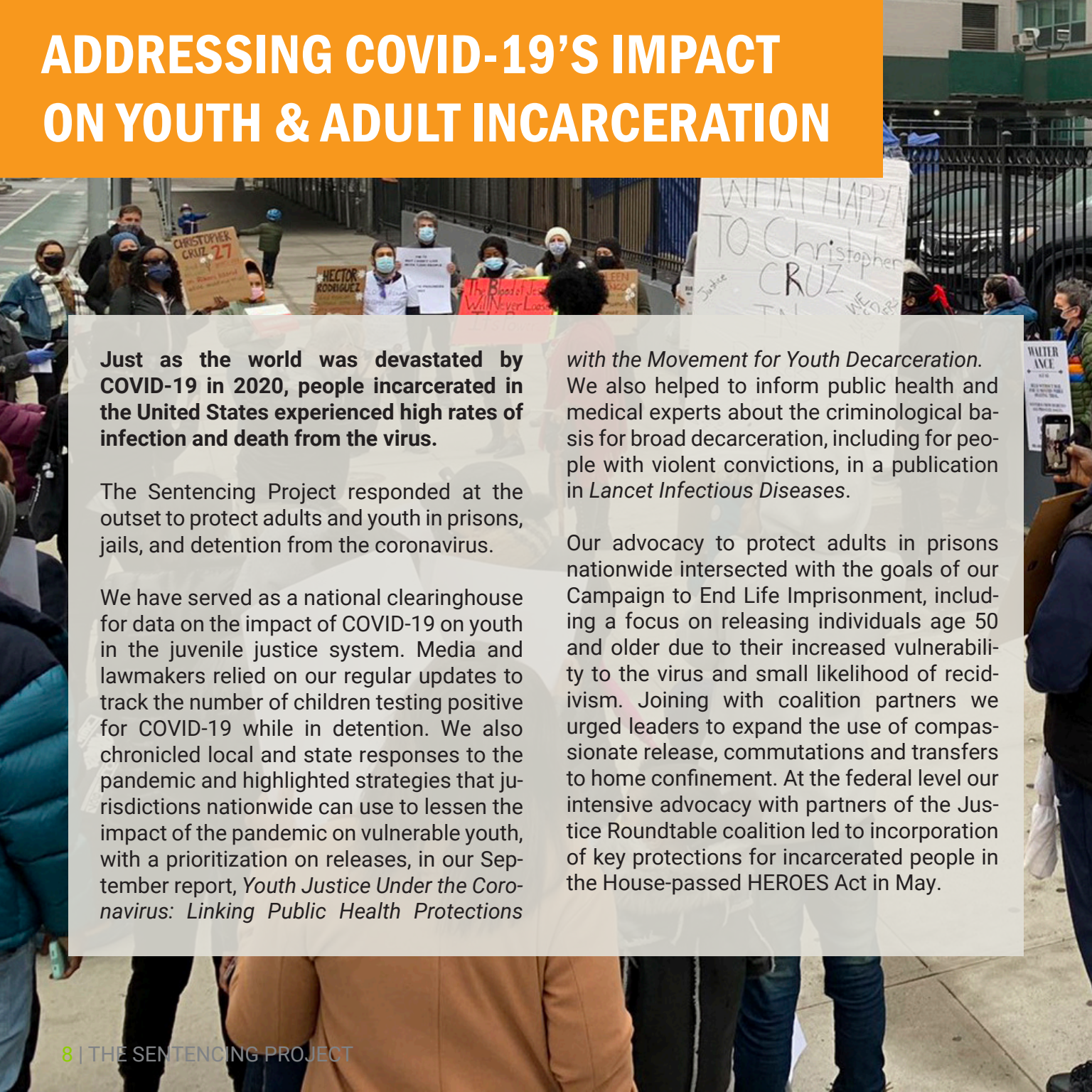
5.2 million Americans with a felony conviction were barred from voting in the 2020 elections, according to The Sentencing Project’s October report, *Locked Out: Estimates of People Denied Voting Rights Due to a Felony Conviction*. Published in conjunction with colleagues at the University of Minnesota, *Locked Out* is the nation’s only resource for estimating the full impact of state laws that exclude people from voting because of a felony conviction. The report revealed that one in 16 African Americans of voting age is disenfranchised, and that rates of disenfranchisement are highest in southern states where Jim Crow-era laws limiting the political power of Black citizens are alive and well.

The Sentencing Project was pleased to help realize a historic legislative victory in the nation’s Capital in 2020 to push back against this racist legacy. The Sentencing Project played a crucial role in a multi-year advocacy effort to restore

voting rights to 4,000 incarcerated District of Columbia citizens. The Sentencing Project supported the bill’s development and introduction by DC Councilmember Robert White. Working with the Mayor-appointed Reentry Commission, led by formerly incarcerated residents, and the Working Families Party, we educated city council offices, organized advocacy meetings, and coordinated implementation conversations with the federal Bureau of Prisons, which maintains custody of DC’s incarcerated residents. The measure marked the first successful legislative effort in the country to restore voting rights to people in prison.

We are committed to protecting our democracy, spreading this success across the country, and ensuring that the criminal legal system is never used to undermine the political voice and power of any community – ever again.

ADDRESSING COVID-19'S IMPACT ON YOUTH & ADULT INCARCERATION



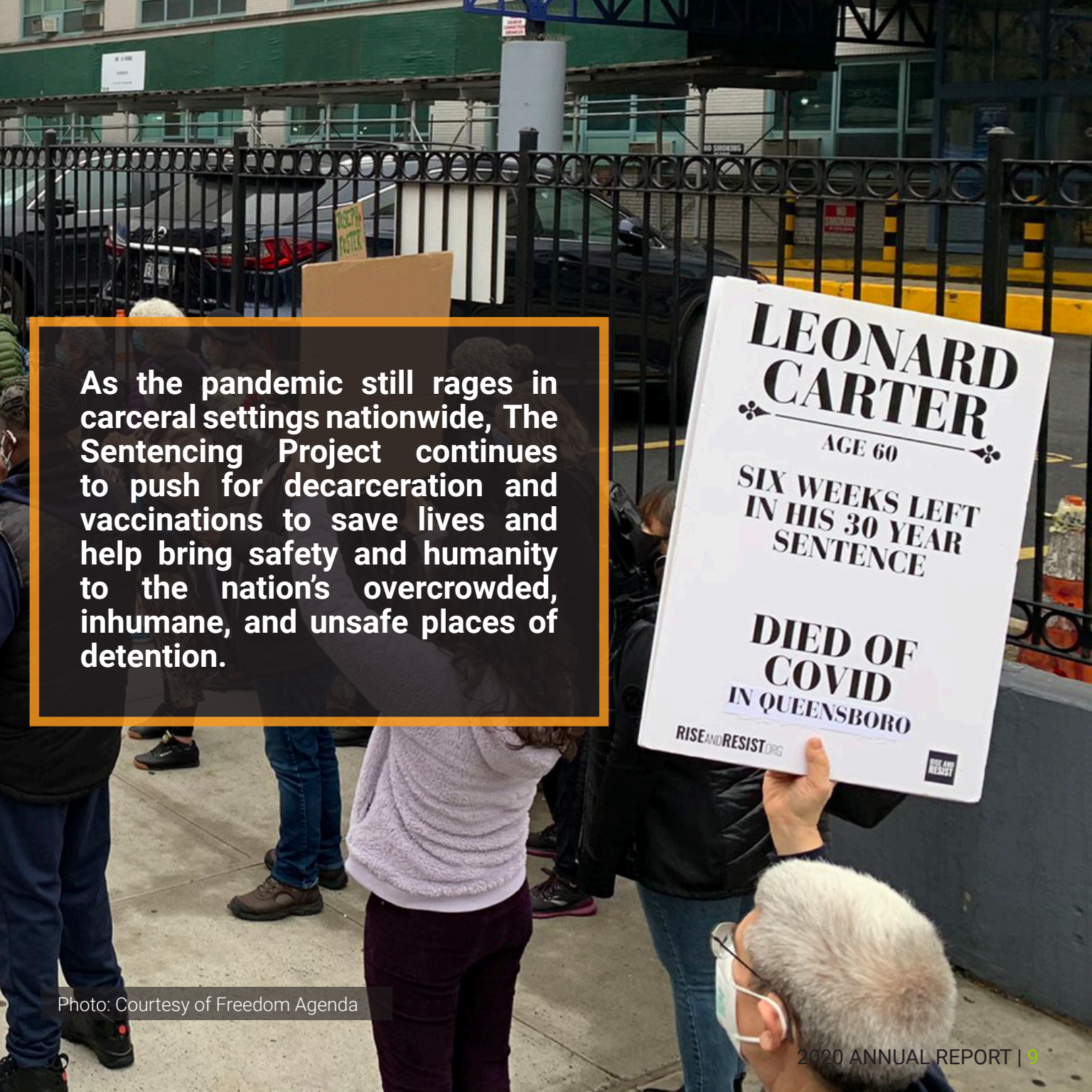
Just as the world was devastated by COVID-19 in 2020, people incarcerated in the United States experienced high rates of infection and death from the virus.

The Sentencing Project responded at the outset to protect adults and youth in prisons, jails, and detention from the coronavirus.

We have served as a national clearinghouse for data on the impact of COVID-19 on youth in the juvenile justice system. Media and lawmakers relied on our regular updates to track the number of children testing positive for COVID-19 while in detention. We also chronicled local and state responses to the pandemic and highlighted strategies that jurisdictions nationwide can use to lessen the impact of the pandemic on vulnerable youth, with a prioritization on releases, in our September report, *Youth Justice Under the Coronavirus: Linking Public Health Protections*

with the Movement for Youth Decarceration. We also helped to inform public health and medical experts about the criminological basis for broad decarceration, including for people with violent convictions, in a publication in *Lancet Infectious Diseases*.

Our advocacy to protect adults in prisons nationwide intersected with the goals of our Campaign to End Life Imprisonment, including a focus on releasing individuals age 50 and older due to their increased vulnerability to the virus and small likelihood of recidivism. Joining with coalition partners we urged leaders to expand the use of compassionate release, commutations and transfers to home confinement. At the federal level our intensive advocacy with partners of the Justice Roundtable coalition led to incorporation of key protections for incarcerated people in the House-passed HEROES Act in May.



As the pandemic still rages in carceral settings nationwide, The Sentencing Project continues to push for decarceration and vaccinations to save lives and help bring safety and humanity to the nation's overcrowded, inhumane, and unsafe places of detention.

Photo: Courtesy of Freedom Agenda

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Marc Mauer

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Advisor

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Communications Associate

Durrel Douglas

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Nazgol Ghandnoosh, Ph.D.

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Kara Gotsch

Director of Strategic Initiatives

Nancy Konjo

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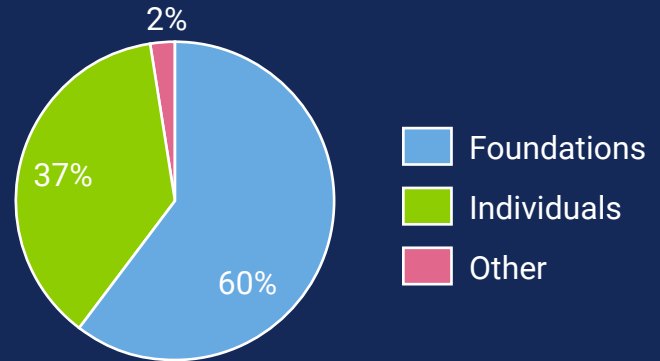
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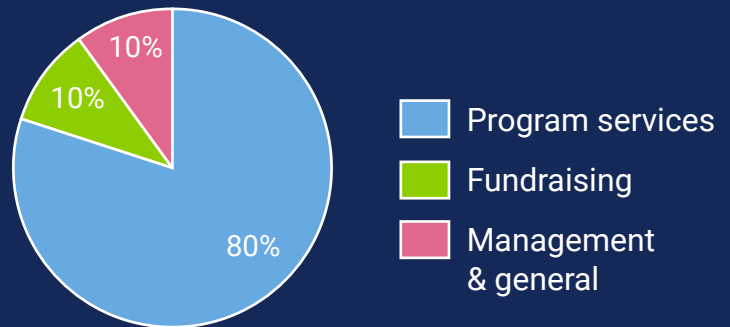
REVENUE

Foundations	2,216,500
Individuals	1,362,622
Other	88,182
TOTAL	\$3,667,304



EXPENSES

Program services	1,440,690
Fundraising	179,510
Management and general	177,519
TOTAL	\$1,797,719





RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY FOR REFORM

1705 DeSales Street NW, 8th Floor
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The Sentencing Project promotes effective and humane responses to crime that minimize imprisonment and criminalization of youth and adults by promoting racial, ethnic, economic, and gender justice.

Cover image: Courtesy of Darren Cambridge

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