

Juvenile Justice Primer

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

problem for them. I don't think his teachers understood how to deal with minority kids."

Shala's son struggled at home and at school. After his arrest, she was overwhelmed by a complex legal system. "I had to deal with additional challenges with attorneys, who were making decisions on behalf of my child," she said.

Shala's situation and subsequent list of questions are common for parents involved in the juvenile justice system. What are my rights? What is a juvenile court counselor? What is a Formal Accountability Agreement? What happens if my child is facing a Measure 11 charge?

Shala joined a parent group and compared notes with a dozen others who've gone through some of the same pain. The group began the first of 12 drafts of the parent handbook as part of county wide efforts to reduce community violence and recidivism, and keep youths from entering the justice system in the first place.

"It is great for parents to have what they need," Multnomah County Circuit Court Judge Nan Waller said. "But it's really our



Parents hug each other at the launch of the Parent Handbook, a 48-page resource for parents with children in the criminal justice system.

ultimate goal for every member of this community to stand up and make sure that children aren't coming into our juvenile justice system. And that ultimately you will put yourself out of business with the parent handbook and instead celebrate the successes it will give

you." The handbook is printed in English and Spanish. It will be available for parents at the Juvenile Services Division in Northeast Portland. It's also available through the Community Healing Initiative (CHI), a multicultural collabora-

tive that includes the Department of Community Justice, Latino Network and Portland Opportunities Industrialization Center (POIC).

"Letting someone else know that you have walked through that fire and made it through is such an important way to give back to your community," said Commissioner Lori Stegmann who also attended the recent event. "Thank you for your love of this community."

Today, Shala's son is off probation and staying out of trouble, she said, after he was assigned to a juvenile probation officer and referred to the Community Healing Initiative.

He didn't have to do any time

but he had to follow the rules.

"Ask questions," Shala said. "If you don't know, ask questions. If they don't know, ask someone else."

"No one has the right or wrong answer," she continued. "Each kid is different. Each case is different."

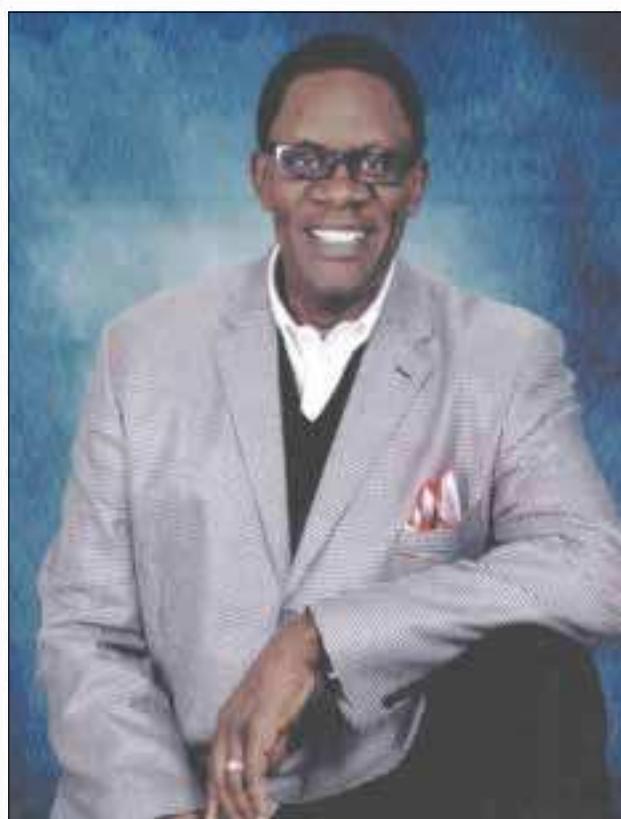
"I'm hoping people will see [the handbook] and speak with their kids about it and help them to prevent from getting in trouble. Because I let my kids know at the drop of a dime that you can walk out this door and your life can change."

Jessica Morkert-Shibley is the communications coordinator for Multnomah County.

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