

# Kids for Cash

## Event Planning Guide

This guide will help you plan a community event using the film *Kids for Cash* to spark dialogue and action about the need for a juvenile justice system that works in the best interest of youth and families. Whether you're using the Gathr platform, organizing around a pre-existing theatrical booking or hosting a private screening, this guide serves as a step-by-step manual on planning and executing a thoughtful and effective event.

### About the Film

*Kids for Cash* is a riveting look behind the notorious “kids-for-cash” scandal that rocked the nation when it first came to light in 2009. In the wake of the shootings at Columbine High School in Colorado, a small town in Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, elected a charismatic judge who was hell-bent on keeping kids in line. While he was on the bench, more than 3,000 children were ripped from their families and imprisoned for years for infractions as petty as creating a fake MySpace page. When one parent dared to question this harsh brand of justice, it was revealed that Judge Ciavarella (along with Judge Conahan, another Luzerne County judge) had received millions of dollars in payments from the privately owned juvenile detention centers where the kids—most of them only in their early teens—were incarcerated.

### Using Film to Spark Dialogue

Film can be a very useful tool for bringing people together, inspiring solutions to problems and sparking new collaborations. Films—especially those that feature complex and fascinating characters—are able to reach people on an immediate and emotional level, opening them up to new ideas and possibilities. Character-driven films, such as *Kids for Cash*, provide a common text from which to start a conversation and put a human face on social, cultural and civic issues. In addition, films can be used to:

- Raise awareness of complex and abstract issues
- Heighten the visibility of your organization
- Attract new allies, supporters and members to your organization
- Connect audiences to actions they can take to make a difference
- Spark networking, especially with other groups in the community and in nearby towns
- Provide a platform for community members to share thoughts, ideas and concerns

By providing intimate perspectives of people whose lives were forever altered by their experiences within the juvenile justice system, *Kids for Cash* offers a new opportunity for dialogue, especially around education, social services and other support systems.

After viewing *Kids for Cash*, audiences are likely to feel a range of emotions, from anger to empathy to motivation. A well-planned screening of this film has the power to leverage that emotional power and inspire collective action. When it comes to social change, film can't do it all—but it can set the stage, laying out the issues in a way that people can hear and building interest in potential solutions.

How can you use *Kids for Cash* to spark dialogue in your community? Read on to find out!

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## Getting Started: Logistics

### Locate and Confirm Your Venue

Depending on where and when you're hoping to have a screening, there are different scenarios that may apply to you.

**Before you do anything, check to see if there is a theatrical booking already confirmed in your city or town at [KidsForCashTheMovie.com/see-the-film](http://KidsForCashTheMovie.com/see-the-film).**

If there is a theatrical booking already confirmed in your town, purchase tickets and contact the theater manager directly about the ability to host a Q&A discussion after a select showing. Go to page 3 to learn about other ways you can take advantage of the screening. For example, the screening can serve as an opportunity to promote the work of your organization, a recent initiative or new program.

**If there is not a theatrical booking already confirmed in your city or town, you have two options:**

#### **Option 1: Host a Gathr screening (likely available through fall 2014)**

Request a screening via the Gathr platform ([KidsForCashTheMovie.com/host-a-screening](http://KidsForCashTheMovie.com/host-a-screening)) and use promo code **ACTIVEVOICE**. Gathr is a web-based distribution tool that enables audiences to bring films to local venues simply by creating demand. Thus, by requesting a screening via Gathr, this makes you the Gathr "Champion" for the event and you and/or your organization lead the charge in rallying your network to buy tickets.

After submitting your request, Gathr will contact you when your booking is confirmed. These screenings are typically booked in regular commercial movie theaters, so attendees must purchase tickets unless your organization has the resources to purchase comp tickets for your guests. You could also find an event sponsor to help cover the price of tickets.

Gathr works to secure your desired local venue, but there is no guarantee that your preferred venue will be available. The ability to host a Q&A or post-screening discussion is also at the discretion of the theater, so be sure to connect with your venue host on these plans as soon as possible.

In some cases, there may be another organization in your city who has already requested a screening of the film via Gathr, and it could be a positive opportunity to collaborate and co-host a screening. Or, if you prefer, you can request a screening of your own.

#### **Option 2: Host a private or non-theatrical screening**

If you would like to host a screening of *Kids for Cash*, but either prefer not to use a movie theater or don't have that option, it is necessary to purchase a screening license. This must be arranged through SenArt Films by emailing [Groups@KidsForCashTheMovie.com](mailto:Groups@KidsForCashTheMovie.com).

**If you are hosting a screening via Gathr, confirm your venue and screening date as soon as possible, so that you can start promoting ticket sales as far in advance as possible.**

## Venue Considerations

- **Accessibility.** Consider if the venue is in a location that your intended audience can easily access. Is the space convenient? Is there parking? Is it close to public transportation? Is there wheelchair access?
- **Layout.** Is there a reception area or space big enough for mingling pre- and post-screening? This is not essential, but can be helpful in facilitating interaction and conversation.
- **Extra time flexibility.** Will the theater or screening space allow extra time on both ends of the screening for setup and cleanup and to host a post-screening discussion in the space?
- **Venue manager.** Does the venue point person or movie theater manager seem flexible and good to work with? If you are choosing between two different venues, the one with a more accommodating point of contact may be the way to go. Once confirmed, if possible, set up a face-to-face meeting with the venue coordinator one to three weeks ahead of time to clarify needs and expectations. To avoid miscommunication, give them advance notice of your needs, such as setting up tables for check-in, microphones and chairs for post-screening discussion, food arrangements, and so on. This may save you a great deal of frustration on the day of the event.

## Strategic Planning & Getting the Most Out of Your Event

### Hold a Planning Meeting

We recommend convening a planning meeting at least five to six weeks prior to when you hope to host your event. This allows ample time to develop your plan and goals, reserve a venue (through Gathr or otherwise), promote the screening, delineate roles, recruit partner organizations, confirm speakers, set the agenda and finalize other arrangements.

The planning meeting is a chance to engage a small group of local stakeholders and potential partners (community leaders, juvenile justice practitioners, law enforcement, educators, policymakers, etc.) in brainstorming how the film can be used to advance local efforts to create juvenile justice and education systems that support healthy, successful youth and safe communities. Inviting others into the planning process can result in a stronger and more well-rounded event.

SenArt Films has also created a 16-minute video module called “Kids in the System” that may be the perfect way to kick off your planning meeting. It depicts youths’ experiences with the juvenile justice system, as well as the role that schools and law enforcement play in pushing youth into that system. The shorter video module can be a good springboard for planning and discussion. To watch, visit [KidsForCashTheMovie.com/kids-in-the-system](http://KidsForCashTheMovie.com/kids-in-the-system).

## For non-theatrical screenings:

**A/V equipment.** Does the space have suitable screening and audio equipment available? This includes a screen, a projector, a laptop or DVD/Blu-ray player, speakers, and all of the right cables that connect and power them. If not, additional planning and arrangements will be necessary. Have a complete technical run-through at least two days before your event to make sure all the equipment is in working order. Test all of your equipment *at the venue where the film will be screened*, and make sure there are no connection, sound or picture issues. Watch the film all the way through to ensure it doesn’t have any scratches or other issues.

**Other considerations.** Check if the space has heating and/or air-conditioning, an adequate supply of comfortable chairs, and other appropriate amenities.



## Define Your Objectives

Clarifying your objectives is a key step in planning a successful event. Think about what you'd like to get out of the event and which outcomes are most realistic. In addition to watching an entertaining film, your event will enable your community to reflect together on how the stories in the film are relevant locally. Juvenile justice practices and school policies vary greatly from state to state and city to city. Take the opportunity with your stakeholders not only to recognize parallels between the film and your community, but also to identify the local issues that hold the most pressing need for change.

As the event organizer, consider the longer-term goals of your work and how this screening event can help you achieve those goals. Identify how you'd like your community to change for the better, then think about how this film screening can support that change. Consider sharing these thoughts with your audience at the community screening event.

Objectives you might consider include the following (these are not mutually exclusive):

- Increase awareness about your local school and juvenile justice policies—how and where they work well, and where they do not work in the best interests of children
- Showcase solutions to some of the challenges raised in the film
- Increase public support and action around local initiatives to pass effective policies and support alternatives to detention
- Generate support from local leadership for systems that are accountable, rehabilitative and economically efficient
- Heighten the visibility of prevention and intervention programs that can benefit from broader membership
- Strengthen collaborations or create a network with local organizations focused on juvenile justice and school policy reform, youth services, human services and other relevant community issues

## Identify Your Target Audiences

Keeping your target audiences in mind is helpful in framing your event and strategizing publicity and outreach. These are questions to consider:

- Which audiences do you need to reach in order to meet your objectives? Which audiences can you access directly (e.g., your current constituents) and how can you build upon those?
- Which new audiences can you engage to broaden your reach, strengthen your work and build new allies?

Don't be afraid to aim high! Contacting influential leaders and decisionmakers in your community can be a great opportunity to attract attention and gain interest in the work you are doing.

## Recruit Partner Organizations

After you have determined your objectives and target audiences, you'll be ready to consider partner organizations that can help you get there. *Kids for Cash* raises themes that are relevant to many community institutions and organizations and you can partner with them to get the word out and build toward your long-term goals.

It's essential to invite other organizations and influential individuals to partner with you on your event, both to make the event as successful as possible and to ensure positive change in your community. Moreover, the planning process is an excellent opportunity for relationship building. The more diverse the group of partners you have on board, the broader the support and sense of community you'll be able to cultivate. We strongly suggest inviting representatives of your partners to be involved early on, rather than simply attending the event itself. These partners can help broaden your reach while making valuable contributions to your planning. Also, remember that a complex issue like juvenile justice has multiple players working on similar issues, so be clear about your goals and ensure that your aims are well-aligned with groups you reach out to.

Partners can get involved in a range of ways, depending on their interest and capacity. At the very least, they can help spread the word about the event on their listservs, websites or social media. And some partners might be able to get more actively involved, contributing ideas, time, resources and panelists for the event. In some instances, event-based partnerships pave the way for longer-term collaborations that will benefit your mutual efforts.

## Types of Organizations to Consider

In addition to tapping into organizations directly involved in the juvenile justice and education systems and advocacy organizations, we encourage you to think outside the box, about other groups and individuals who can play an influential role in how juvenile justice and school zero tolerance policies are addressed in your community. For example, mental health providers offer important counseling services for youth and are often undervalued. Youth development organizations may be providing after-school or job training services to at-risk or drop-out youth in your community. It's the less obvious partners that will help you reach new potential supporters and bring your messages to new audiences. Consider the following:

- Juvenile and criminal justice advocacy organizations
- PTAs and other parent organizations
- Youth-serving organizations, such as Boys and Girls Clubs of America, the YMCA and Big Brothers Big Sisters
- School administrators and teachers
- The legal community, including private law firms and/or public defenders
- The court system, including judges and probation officers
- Universities/colleges, law schools and social work programs
- Local government services, including human services and family and child services
- Faith-based organizations, churches and temples
- Public defender associations
- Mental health service providers
- Law enforcement, school resource officers and district attorneys
- Community foundations
- Libraries
- Media/film centers, local public media stations

If you're hosting a planning meeting, invite potential partners and make it clear that you want and need their input in planning the event so they feel more invested in it.

## Reaching out to groups you've never worked with before:

### Introduce yourself and your "ask."

It's helpful to make clear in the first few sentences who you are and why you're reaching out. Individuals and organizations are busy and will appreciate this.

### Offer background and context.

Include a brief description of the film so they'll immediately know what it's about. Send them the URL for the film ([KidsForCashTheMovie.com](http://KidsForCashTheMovie.com)), where they can learn more about it.

### Make your pitch relevant.

Highlight elements of the film that are most relevant to their interests. For example, parent organizations would be interested in the fact that the film portrays parent perspectives and can prompt dialogue among parents about how they can be better advocates for their children.

### Highlight the partner benefits.

Let groups know that getting involved in your event can be a good opportunity for them to raise their own visibility and reach new audiences.

### Remember that groups have different capacities and interests, so involvement will vary.

Some will simply send your email blast to their listserv; others may assist with logistical planning or contribute funds. Be mindful of what your partners are capable of and make sure you're not asking them for too much (or too little!) as you plan your event.

## Round Up RSVPs

Gathering RSVPs is a good idea, especially if your venue has limited seating. But don't put all your faith in the RSVP list—there will always be no-shows (could be up to a 30% drop-off). In addition, people who did not RSVP will likely show up. Tracking ahead of time just gives you an indicator of what to expect. Here are some tips to help you through this process:

- In your targeted promotion of your screening, request that people RSVP via the Gathr platform, an Eventbrite page or another online tracking system.
- Set the RSVP deadline for a few days before the actual event. If you get fewer responses than expected, you will still have enough time to reach out to more people, and if there are more than expected, you can notify people who have not sent an RSVP that they may not be guaranteed a seat.
- If your event is at capacity, send out a reminder email to confirmed attendees the day before the event. Let them know you will hold their seat until 15 minutes prior to the event start time.
- If your numbers are close to reaching capacity at the time of the event, add anyone who shows up without an RSVP to a waiting list, letting in as many as can be accommodated just before the screening starts.

## Promoting Your Event

### Templates and Materials Available

Go to: [KidsForCashTheMovie.com/host-a-screening](http://KidsForCashTheMovie.com/host-a-screening) or join the Facebook Group: [facebook.com/groups/KidsforCashGathrChampions](https://www.facebook.com/groups/KidsforCashGathrChampions)

- Email blast template
- Event flyer template
- Media advisory template
- Film logo
- Sign-up sheets
- Event photography checklist
- Photo release notices
- Gathr screening one-pager
- Gathr social media guide
- Gathr screening champion guide

There are different ways to promote an event, each with a different function. Read through the categories outlined below, then pick a few tactics based on what you think will be most successful in your community.

### Flyer Distribution

- Use the flyer template for laying out the details of your specific event.
- Make copies (in color if your budget permits) and hand them out at targeted events and meetings that occur prior to your community screening event.

## A Few Pointers from Gathr: How to “Tip” Your Screening

### Start small.

Reach out to friends, family and any early key supporters of the film with an email pitch and begin growing a community of followers who will dedicate the time necessary to help you get the word out. Engaging a core group will help you build interest exponentially.

### Keep your attendees informed and engaged.

Regularly update your community with news, press clippings, trailers and extra features.

### Make use of Gathr social media tools.

As your Theatrical-On-Demand release date approaches, you can make use of Gathr tools such as the Gathr It button, the Facebook application and the Notify Me tool.

### Engage a Street Team.

Create a community of volunteers to spread the word on the streets with flyers and sign-up sheets.

Visit [Gathr.us](http://Gathr.us) for more information on “tipping” your screening and other helpful tactics, or join the Facebook group: [www.facebook.com/groups/KidsforCashGathrChampions](https://www.facebook.com/groups/KidsforCashGathrChampions)

## Email Blasts

Email all of your contacts about your upcoming event. We encourage a series of three email blasts outlined below. For each, encourage people to forward the emails to the contacts in their networks.

1. The first email blast announces the event and provides the date, location and so on. It should be sent as soon as the date and venue are confirmed.
2. The second email, which should be sent a few days before the event, is a reminder and provides any new specific details as well as information on special features, speakers, activities and so on.
3. After the event, send the third email in order to share key takeaways from the discussion as well as specific call-to-action prompts. It should also talk about what this activity meant for the community and include information on how to continue contributing.

## Partner Cross-Promotion

Keep your partner organizations and groups in the loop with your promotional materials and flyers so that they can promote the event as well. Ask each group director to send out an email blast, using the provided templates. Make sure you give them a good amount of lead time to promote the event.

## Framing Your Event

### Using *Kids for Cash* to Discuss Juvenile Justice and Zero Tolerance in Your State

The US juvenile justice system has relied too heavily on incarceration for far too long, and schools have played a pivotal role in sending children into that system. Juvenile incarceration is not only damaging to children and unnecessarily costly for taxpayers, but also puts communities at risk by increasing the odds that children will break the law after their release. Although *Kids for Cash* spotlights one specific incident in Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, it touches on many themes that are relevant for conversations about the juvenile justice and education systems anywhere. Consider how you can frame the story of Luzerne County in the context of your own state.

Photo courtesy of SenArt Films/*Kids for Cash* Movie

## Important Themes

There are many themes in the film that are relevant nationwide, regardless of the circumstances in your state. Please see below for recommended themes that you can draw upon for your community screening. In addition, see pages 9 through 12 of our *Kids for Cash* Discussion Guide for a more in-depth look and for specific questions related to these themes. Find the guide at: [KidsForCashTheMovie.com/get-involved](http://KidsForCashTheMovie.com/get-involved).

- **Right to Counsel, Know Your Rights.** Children need attorneys to either divert them from or guide them through the complexities of the juvenile justice system. The consequences associated with lack of counsel are dire and many times have permanent, life-altering effects. Parents and youth need to demand access to an attorney from the moment there is police or court involvement and continue to exercise that right to counsel at every point in the process. Waivers of the right to counsel should be treated with great skepticism and should be permitted only if the child has first been allowed to consult with an attorney about the implications of waiver.
- **Zero Tolerance Policies.** Many schools and communities have adopted rigid zero tolerance policies that do not allow room for extenuating circumstances or age-appropriate responses. Although these policies might be popular, this one-size-fits-all approach is doing more harm than good. School boards and administrators can play an important role in shutting down the school-to-prison pipeline by reclaiming common-sense approaches to school discipline and reducing inappropriate reliance on law enforcement.
- **Disrupted Education, Disrupted Lives.** The consequences of removing a child from his or her school are substantial. Beyond the obvious disruption in educational progress, the emotional toll is often devastating and permanent. Children lose their entire support system and are often reluctant to return to school. If they do go back to school, they rarely return to the same level of academic achievement. In fact, 66% of teens who are removed from their schools ultimately drop out.
- **Adolescent Brain Development.** “What were you thinking?” Nearly every parent of a teen has uttered this phrase at some point. Teenagers do careless and impulsive things, and there is a reason. Numerous studies confirm that although many teens possess the physical attributes of an adult, they do not possess the emotional maturity or sense of judgment of an adult. In fact, key functional parts of the human brain are not fully developed until the age of 25.
- **Trauma for Youth and Families.** Going to court and being taken from your family, treated like a criminal and placed in a confined environment with other troubled youth are traumatizing events. They affect both the teens and their families, many of whom have already experienced trauma. The juvenile justice system should not exacerbate trauma. The long-term mental health effects of detention can permanently alter a child’s view of the world and lead to lifelong emotional instability, increasing dependence on public services and decreasing successful transitions to adulthood. Like many of the institutions used to confine children across the country, the private, for-profit facility featured in *Kids for Cash* described itself as a treatment facility, and even included the phrase “child care” in its name. As seen in the film, the reality of life inside a juvenile prison is much harsher and more harmful than words like “care” and “treatment” would suggest.
- **Financial Costs to Families and Taxpayers.** The high cost of attorney fees, court costs, fines, restitution, placement support fees and probation fees can be overwhelming for families. And there are bigger picture financial implications for us all; the cost of placing a child in a facility can be as high as \$600 a day, averaging \$88,000 a year—ultimately paid by taxpayers. In addition, the high costs do not reflect improved outcomes. Proven alternatives to costly residential facilities can help children and families in their own communities, their own homes and their own schools, at a fraction of the cost.
- **Overuse of Incarceration.** 95% of youth arrests each year are for nonviolent crimes or probation violations. Although this “tough on crime” approach may be effective during election campaigns, there is no evidence it actually increases public safety. In fact, when it comes to children and youth, it often ultimately decreases public safety. Schools, communities, mental health providers and families can hold youth accountable and manage risk to public safety without placing kids in facilities for delinquent youth.

## Additional Talking Points

The following messages were prepared by the Annie E. Casey Foundation Juvenile Justice Strategy Group and may assist you with the framing of your event.

- **The United States is the most punitive country for youth.** No other country in the world punishes children as harshly as the United States. We incarcerate five times more youth than the next closest country and are the only country in the world that sentences youth to life in prison without the possibility of parole. The United States is also the only country in the world that permits children as young as seven years old to be arrested and prosecuted.
- **Individual decisions lead to systemic failures.** The everyday decisions made by adults in the juvenile justice and education systems have enormous consequences for children's lives. As shown in the film, children pay a steep price when those decisions are careless, inconsistent, or (worst) motivated by self-interest. Although some juvenile justice and education reform initiatives focus primarily on developing new community-based programs as an important way to reduce the number of children in custody, the truth is that many of the kids who are locked up in this country are there due to an adult's bad decision, not due to a lack of programmatic resources.
- **Decisionmakers should use the "my child" perspective.** Outcomes improve when judges, prosecutors, school administrators, probation officers, teachers and law enforcement consider how they would want their own children treated. In addition, children who come into contact with the law are part of our communities. It is in all our interests that the interventions leave them better off, to make our communities stronger.
- **Transparency and community engagement are key to ensuring safe communities and healthy children.** Everyone in the juvenile justice and education systems needs to be held accountable. The tragic events depicted in *Kids for Cash* took place over a period of years while professionals throughout both systems simply looked the other way. Two things forced the community to confront what was happening: a mother who fought hard for her daughter to be treated fairly and data revealing that children in Luzerne County were being strong-armed into waiving their constitutional rights as they entered the courtroom.
- **There is a disproportionate number of minority children and youth in confinement.** Although the children featured in *Kids for Cash* are all white, children of color account for 68% of youth in custody in the United States (source: Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement, 2010). African American youth are nearly five times as likely to be confined as their white peers for exactly the same infractions. Latino and American Indian youth are between two and three times as likely to be confined. The disparities in youth confinement rates reflect systems that treat youth of color, particularly African Americans and Latinos, more punitively than white youth.
- **Privatization can open the door for greed to triumph over good government.** The inevitably corrupting influence of profit motives in public systems holds strong potential to elevate monetary concerns over the best outcomes for children. Luzerne County is a dramatic illustration of the schoolhouse-to-jailhouse (or school-to-prison) pipeline that has pushed hundreds of thousands of children out of America's classrooms and into our courtrooms over the last ten years.
- **Children need stability.** All children deserve to live in stable and permanent families. Because there is nothing that disrupts the stability of a child's connection to his or her family more than removing the child from his or her home, juvenile justice systems must treat out-of-home placements as an option of last resort, when there is no other means to protect public safety. *Kids for Cash* is a painful, but important examination of a system that took a very different approach.

Photo courtesy of SenArt Films/*Kids for Cash* Movie

## Formatting Your Event

After your objectives are secured, begin to plan the rundown for the event. Your screening event should contain the basic elements outlined below, with some customization according to your needs. Be sure to double check and confirm with the theater (and/or Gathr) that there is a place to hold a reception (if appropriate) and that there is time available to host a post-screening discussion in the theater, as this may have to be negotiated with the theater on a case-by-case basis.

Activity	Time Frame	Purpose/Details
<b>Pre-Screening Reception (optional)</b>	30-60 minutes	Builds excitement for the screening event and facilitates networking.
<b>Film Introduction</b>	5 minutes	Gives context to the event. Details and talking points for the introduction are on the next page.
<b><i>Kids for Cash</i> Film Screening</b>	2 hours	This is the centerpiece of your event!
<b>Post-Screening Discussion</b>	30 minutes	Features your designated speakers and desired framing. Keep the conversation rolling if it's going well, but also be respectful of people's time and attention spans.
<b>Audience Q&amp;A</b>	5-10 minutes	If time allows, take questions from the audience, but prep your speakers/panelists if you plan to do so, as you never know what might be brought up.
<b>Post-Screening Reception (optional)</b>	1 hour	People may want to gather for a meal or at a nearby bar/restaurant or linger in the space to discuss further thoughts and ideas about the film.

**Pro Tip: Have an Emcee.** Successful events often have a charismatic emcee to move the program along. Invite a significant leader or local personality to introduce the film—of course, the lead organizer can also do it. Make sure your emcee can give context on the broader campaign for juvenile justice reform or designate a different person to talk about this during the introduction. The emcee could also be the moderator of the post-screening discussion, but doesn't have to be.

## Opening Remarks

In five minutes or less, the guests should be welcomed and introduced as core components of the event. Their presence is important for communicating the message of the film beyond the walls of the screening room.

- Introduce yourself, your organization and why the event is important to your community.
- Encourage people to stick around for the discussion afterward.
- Thank any significant partners, supporters and so on.
- State that your community screening is part of a national effort to raise awareness of the harmful effects of zero tolerance policies in the juvenile justice and education systems, and highlight the need to ensure that our systems are working to protect children and families and not causing more harm.

## Post-Screening Panel Discussion

Panelists can help put the film in context by providing background information about how the juvenile justice system works in their city, county or state and whether local schools play a role in forcing children into that system through zero tolerance policies. Plan about 30 minutes for discussion and 5 to 10 minutes for an audience Q&A.

### The Panelists

- Be sure to present a range of perspectives, based on what you identified as the frame of your event. Possible panelists might include: a local juvenile justice expert, a young person who has been through the system, a local school superintendent and a government official. Your community partners can serve as great sources for potential panelists. Aim for no more than four panelists.
- If possible, arrange for the panelists to preview the film before the event so that they have an opportunity to prepare remarks.
- Give your panelists an idea of who will be in the audience so they can tailor the discussion to the audience's interests. For example, if you anticipate a general audience, ask panelists to tone down any specific jargon.

### The Moderator

- Find an experienced moderator for the event (could be your emcee) or at least someone who is comfortable speaking in public and has an understanding of the issues.
- The moderator's responsibility is to keep the conversation going and ensure that all points are addressed in the time you have scheduled for discussion.
- The moderator should set the stage with relevant statistics or anecdotes about what's happening in your community as a way to localize the story even more.
- The moderator should ask the panelists to introduce themselves, their organization and how their work relates to what was just seen in the film.
- The moderator might consider prompting the panelists with an opening question such as, "What jumped out at you in the film?" Ideally, the panelists will reference specific scenes from the film as they make their points.
- The moderator should be prepared to facilitate a conversation that may delve into sensitive issues around race and class. Please refer to page 4 of Active Voice's *Kids for Cash* Discussion Guide ([KidsForCashTheMovie.com/get-involved](http://KidsForCashTheMovie.com/get-involved)) for tips on how to establish a safe space for open dialogue and how to handle a conversation that gets tough.

## The Content

- The moderator should ask each panelist to speak on an issue or topic based on their expertise, but should also encourage interaction among the panelists so it becomes more of a dynamic conversation rather than a presentation of speakers.
- The post-screening discussion is an opportunity to showcase examples of success stories—either from your community or a similar town—in which people and/or organizations have taken proactive steps to address challenges in the juvenile justice system. Your event could potentially be an opportunity to build support for those efforts.

## Audience Engagement

- In your planning stage, determine how much audience engagement you would like to include during your panel discussion. Q&As are not the same as dialogues, in which audience opinions are shared.
- If you determine you'd like to do a Q&A, ask audience members to keep their questions short so that many voices may be heard.
- Decide whether you'll have microphones to pass around or if audience members have to come to microphones set up in the aisles.
- To keep more control of the Q&A, you may consider having audience members write their questions on notecards and designating someone from your organization to filter for questions that stay on message and don't derail the conversation.
- If a deeper dialogue is desired, it may require some careful planning around creating a space for everyone to be heard in a safe way.
- Be prepared for negative comments and strong emotional reactions from audience members. For example, there may be audience members who disagree with some of the panelists' perspectives. A skilled moderator can help ensure a civil, productive conversation in which many perspectives are heard.



Photo courtesy of SenArt Films/Kids for Cash Movie

## Action Steps and Follow-Up

The conversation can and should continue beyond your event! We hope your event leads to additional activities and conversations that encourage dialogue and community engagement.

As part of your community conversation, clearly convey a set of realistic, tangible goals that your organization and partners intend to accomplish with the active support and participation of community members. Offer feasible ways for audience members to get directly involved, including the following:

- Support current legislation as recommended by local organizations doing juvenile justice advocacy work.
- Sign up for local email lists for actions and updates on how you can help support improvements to your state and local juvenile justice systems.
- Follow @KidsForCash, @active\_voice and others on Twitter.
- Sign up for updates on the film at [KidsForCashTheMovie.com](http://KidsForCashTheMovie.com).
- Join or start a parent support group to empower local parents to make better decisions on helping reduce their kids' contact with the system.
- Find out if your school district embraces a zero tolerance policy, and if so, suggest better policies. Encourage other parents to speak out against zero tolerance policies at school board meetings.
- Create a speakers bureau and accompanying presentation that can be taken "on the road" for parents' groups, civic club meetings, school board meetings, teachers' in-service days and so on. Be sure to include youth and families who have experienced this firsthand. As witnessed in this film, their voices are powerful.
- If you're part of a group that meets regularly, such as a book club or a faith group, bring these themes or presentations into your regular meetings and brainstorm solutions together.

Provide your audience with resources that address dynamics specific to your community. These are some resources to consider:

- Fact sheets on the juvenile justice system in your city/state/region
- Information about where to go for help if you or a family member comes in contact with the juvenile justice system
- A flyer highlighting upcoming events and actions led by you and/or your partner organizations

Go to [KidsForCashTheMovie.com/get-involved](http://KidsForCashTheMovie.com/get-involved) for additional information and resources, including state-based statistics on youth incarceration and more ideas on how your audience can take action.

## Good Luck!

With the right planning and partnerships, your event is sure to be a success. We believe that convening the community around a compelling film to address an urgent problem, like challenges in the juvenile justice and education systems can be a significant way to spur people to action. We wish you the best with your efforts to create safer, healthier communities for all families and youth.

## Planning Checklist

### Preliminary prep – at least 5-6 weeks prior to event

- Make initial inquiries regarding venue and date of screening (via traditional theater, Gathr or other).
- Hold a planning meeting.
- Recruit partners and/or co-sponsors.
- Determine your general objectives and target audiences.

### Initial planning – 4-5 weeks prior to event

- Confirm the venue and date of your event.
- Refine objectives for the event.
- Identify roles for partner organizations and secure commitments.

### Logistical planning – 3-4 weeks prior to event

- Draft the event agenda (and vet with partners if applicable).
- Determine speakers, panelists, performers and the moderator.
- Create promotional materials: a flyer, email blasts and/or a press release.
- Arrange for a translator to attend if you expect audience members with limited English proficiency.

### Continued planning – 2 weeks prior to event

- Send out your media advisory.
- Confirm food for the reception (if applicable).
- Confirm all details with event staff (caterer, venue, IT equipment, etc.) and finalize the agenda.

### Media outreach – 10 days prior to event

- Follow up with any film or social-issue press that expressed an interest in covering your event. Remind them what makes your event unique and important for the community.

### Final logistics – several days prior to event

- Ensure delivery of film to the theater and that all is in working order (you don't have to worry about this if you're using Gathr).
- Send a reminder email blast.
- Make copies of the program or handout (with relevant facts, action steps) to distribute at the event.

### At the event itself

- Before the event starts, huddle with your local partners and panelists to get everyone on the same page regarding your introductions and post-screening discussion.
- Set up any tables or display materials.
- Assign one or two people to greet people as they arrive and to distribute programs, materials and so on.
- Assign a timekeeper to keep the event on track.
- Check in with your photographer to make sure he/she understands the event's agenda.
- If you collected RSVPs, have an alphabetically ordered guest list handy to keep track of who comes and how many unexpected people show up.

### After your screening

- Send a follow-up email to attendees thanking them and invite them to future meetings and events.

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Active Voice tackles social issues through the creative use of film. We believe that real progress requires real connection and that film has a unique power to bring people together in meaningful ways. Every day, Active Voice helps filmmakers, funders and communities start the conversations and relationships that lead to lasting, measurable change. Since our inception in 2001, Active Voice has influenced local, regional and national dialogue on issues including immigration, criminal justice, health care and education. [www.activevoice.net](http://www.activevoice.net)



SenArt Films was created in 2000 with the mission to create commercially viable films that aspire to the highest level of storytelling and execution, passionately engaging an audience. SenArt focuses on character-driven projects that have the potential to meld socially-conscious issues with entertainment, creating broad discussion. SenArt has produced the Oscar® winning film *The Fog of War* along with other award-winning films such as *The Station Agent*, *Stevie*, *Bonneville* and *The War Tapes*. [www.senartfilms.com](http://www.senartfilms.com)



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