

Why Promote Community-Based Alternatives to Secure Confinement

Most youth who come to the attention of the juvenile justice system should be diverted. The goal of the juvenile justice system should be to intervene only as much as necessary, so only use service, supervision, or placement for those youth that need it and make sure to only refer them to services that are necessary for positive behavior change.

- ▶ **Despite declining rates** of youth held in secure confinement, a large number of non-violent youth who are not chronic or serious offenders, remain in secure confinement. This includes status offenders and those detained only for a violation of a court order.
- ▶ According to research, the confinement of youth does not prevent further recidivism and may actually **cause significant harm**.
- ▶ There is significant evidence of **widespread and growing maltreatment** of youth in state-funded juvenile corrections facilities including sexual victimization, physical abuse, coercive use of force, and over reliance on disciplinary isolation.
- ▶ **African-American, Hispanic** and **American Indian** youth are far more likely than their white counterparts to be placed in secure confinement, even after controlling for the seriousness of an offense, offending history and other factors.
- ▶ There is **public support** for effective and rehabilitative community-based services for youth.
- ▶ Dispositional alternatives, especially community-based and family-centered programs, have proven to be **successful for young people** who have serious problems. These programs meet the needs of justice-involved youth and should be greatly expanded.
- ▶ **States should limit placement of youth to secure confinement** to only those who have committed serious offenses and who pose clear, demonstrable risks to public safety.
- ▶ Public safety is better served when youth learn and practice new skills in their **home, neighborhood, and community environment**, rather than in secure confinement settings.

Possible Outcomes

- ▶ **PROMOTE PERSONAL GROWTH** and positive behavior changes for justice-involved youth.
- ▶ **REDUCE TRAUMA** to youth that results from confinement and institutionalization.
- ▶ **REDUCE THE POSSIBILITY FOR A YOUTH TO RETURN** to the justice system for a new offense.
- ▶ **REDUCE COST** by using funds to invest in community alternatives and programs rather than in secure confinement that is more expensive and less effective.
- ▶ **MAKE PROGRESS IN ACHIEVING RACE EQUITY** for youth in the justice system.





Who Is Involved in Implementing Community-Based Alternatives?



JUDGES EXERCISING LEADERSHIP
 Judicial officers can help redirect system and community understanding and resources to programs and services that have proven to be beneficial for at-risk youth. They can use their statutory and inherent judicial powers to lead reforms that reduce youth involvement in the system and reduce incarceration.



COLLABORATIVE PARTNERS
 Involve juvenile justice professionals, treatment and service providers, community leaders, and families in cross-systems and community-level collaborations that seek to identify and overcome barriers, and continuously explore new options as alternatives to youth incarceration.

Which Youth Should Be Considered for Community-Based Alternatives to Secure Confinement?



YOUTH WITH SERIOUS OFFENSES

Youth who have committed serious offenses or have serious offense histories and would otherwise be referred to secure juvenile facilities should be considered eligible for programs that are community-based and family-centered because these programs address their needs and are effective at promoting long term behavior change.

How Do You Implement Community-Based Alternatives to Secure Confinement?



DATA
 Judicial leaders and collaborative partners should collect and review data routinely to identify potential disparities in service provision, understand outcomes of placement and other programs, identify areas for improvement, and ensure the needs of youth and families are being met.



EDUCATION AND TRAINING
 Judicial leaders should seek ongoing education and training opportunities, including race equity training, for all collaborative partners to identify innovative tools, programs, services, and interventions to reduce delinquent behavior and recidivism, improve positive youth development, and promote the safety of youth, their families, crime victims, and the community.



TRAUMA-INFORMED AND DEVELOPMENTALLY APPROPRIATE TOOLS FOR SCREENING, ASSESSMENT, SERVICES
 Structured decision-making tools and validated screening and assessments tools can help ensure decisions made by the court and collaborative partners provide appropriate levels of services. Evidence-based tools and interventions that are trauma-informed and developmentally appropriate also ensure that each youth's unique strengths, protective factors, and needs are identified and addressed.



RESTORATIVE JUSTICE
 The court, system partners, and community partners can adopt a culture that prioritizes restorative justice and uses restorative justice practices for engaging victims, offenders and their families, and the community to repair harm, allowing youth to learn from their mistakes and make positive changes.



MENTORING /CREDIBLE MESSENGERS
 The court, system partners, and community partners can work with mentors and credible messengers (individuals with lived experience) to give youth a support in the community as role models who have experience with similar struggles and barriers and demonstrate to youth that they can achieve their goals and potential.



THERAPEUTIC SUPPORTS
 Youth can remain at home and in their community with intensive therapeutic support, including Family Functional Therapy (FFT), and Trauma-Informed Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (TI-CBT). These supports meet youth and family needs and help youth learn how to modify their behavior in their home community.



INCENTIVES AND GRADUATED SANCTIONS
 Adolescent brain science supports using meaningful incentives in promoting desired behavior change and meaningful graduated sanctions to hold youth accountable.



MOTIVATIONAL INTERVIEWING SKILLS
 Court professionals and collaborative partners can use Motivational Interviewing (MI) to more effectively communicate and collaborate with youth and families to strengthen their personal motivation for, and commitment to, positive behavior change.

How Do You Ensure Community Safety?



STRUCTURE THE YOUTH'S TIME TO INCLUDE ADULT SUPERVISION
 Engage caring adults like family members, adults youth trust, mentors, and teachers to encourage school attendance, program participation, employment, community services activities, and other prosocial connections and activities. Ensure that a trauma-informed approach to structured supervision is implemented by all stakeholders.



PROBATION OVERSIGHT TO PROMOTE POSITIVE SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT
 Encouraging and facilitating school and program attendance, collaborating with families to promote desired behavior at home, and providing supervision to ensure youth are meeting their goals is a focus of probation. Forging stronger connections between students that are on probation and the schools they attend will improve the likelihood of probation completion and success. Successful completion of probation increased in communities where there is a commitment to juvenile crime prevention and rehabilitation from school systems and personnel.



DAY AND EVENING REPORTING CENTERS
 Provide structured supervision for youth during peak crime hours and offer programming that includes structured activities and classes focusing on needs and/or skills to improve outcomes for youth on probation, and support the goal of meeting the stipulations set forth by probation.



ELECTRONIC MONITORING AND/OR HOUSE ARREST
 For some youth whose needs assessment indicates a higher risk, or as a graduated response, electronic monitoring and/or house arrest can be used to help ensure safety without removing the child from the community and placing them in a facility.