

Transition and Reentry

Overview

Research tells us that juveniles experience extremely high recidivism rates (up to 55%), and it is even worse for those with disabilities.¹ Moreover, many youth do not reengage with educational systems after exiting from correctional systems.² The reconnection to school is essential because education is an important protective factor in reentry success; poor academic performance is a risk factor linked to recidivism.^{3,4} Youth who do not attend school regularly have higher numbers of delinquency referrals than those who regularly attend.⁵ Partnerships between local educational systems and justice systems are an essential component of juvenile reentry because these partnerships help remedy two critical gaps in reentry: a shortage of appropriate schools for those leaving custody (especially for those with disabilities) and delayed access to local schools.⁶ This transition must not happen haphazardly but should be carefully coordinated to promote positive student outcomes.^{7,8} Below, we summarize the best practices for meeting the needs of youth exiting correctional facilities.

Key Principles of Practice

The following principles were identified in a review of *Transition Toolkit 2.0: Meeting the Educational Needs of Youth Exposed to the Juvenile Justice System*.⁹

Transition Planning (Including Educational and Career Planning) Begins at Facility Intake Reentry planning for youth with or without disabilities should begin as soon as a youth arrives at a correctional facility and should outline transition issues, plus academic, career, and educational goals, and provide students with educational and career programming that prepares them for the challenges they might encounter after their release from custody.^{10,11} The 2004 Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) mandates that students with disabilities who are older than 16 years must have specific documentation of age- and disability-appropriate transition services and plans in their individualized education program (IEP).¹² Transitioning to community schools should be coordinated, be outcome oriented, and promote successful movement between the facility and the community, using established evidence- and research-based practices.^{13,14} This is a complex issue that needs to be organized by a transition team, including correctional staff, the youth themselves, their families, community partners, and local educational representatives.¹⁵ A consistent transition counseling and youth reassessment process while at the facility and a planned sequence of services after release are key ingredients for the plan's success.¹⁶

Specific Resources for All Youth

[Improving Transition Outcomes for Youth Involved in the Juvenile Justice System: Practical Considerations](#): This information brief describes the characteristics of and the issues faced by youth involved with the juvenile justice system, including those with disabilities. It provides a framework for youth service professionals to help youth avoid or transition out of the juvenile justice system, promotes cross-collaboration, and highlights promising practices currently being implemented in the United States.

[National Alliance for Secondary Education and Transition \(NASET\)](#): NASET's primary function is to "to articulate national standards and quality indicators that serve to guide policy development and professional practice at both State and local levels." This webpage provides links to the resources and information offered by NASET.

[The National Technical Assistance Center for the Education of Neglected or Delinquent Children and Youth \(NDTAC\): Transition](#): This webpage presents information and resources that enable administrators and service providers to deliver high-quality transition services for children and youth moving into, through, and out of education programs within the juvenile justice and child welfare systems. In particular, it links to NDTAC's downloadable *Toolkit for Meeting the Educational Needs of Youth Exposed to the Juvenile Justice System*.

[A Summary of Best Practices in School Reentry for Incarcerated Youth Returning Home](#): This report summarizes research on best practices in school reenrollment for young people leaving juvenile justice facilities and returning to their home schools. It summarizes the practices in place in many States and offers several recommendations for best practices.

[What Works in Reentry Clearinghouse](#): This Web-based resource is a "one-stop shop" for research on the effectiveness of a wide variety of reentry programs and practices. It includes links to key focus areas that may be relevant for youth with disabilities, such as cognitive behavioral treatment and mental and physical health.

Specific Resources for Youth With Disabilities

[Age Appropriate Transition Assessment Toolkit](#): This toolkit, created by the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center (NSTTAC), describes the steps for conducting age-appropriate transition assessment. It includes numerous sample tools to assist with this process.

[GAINS Reentry Checklist for Inmates Identified With Mental Health Service Needs](#): This form provides guidelines and specifications for documenting the mental health needs of youth who have been newly incarcerated. It can serve as a model for facilities to plan for the necessary services for these detainees at the onset of their incarceration.

[NSTTAC's Secondary Transition Evidence-Based Practices](#): This flyer graphically depicts the components of evidence-based practices in transition planning for youth with disabilities. Key terms are linked to additional resources and information.

[National Technical Assistance Center on Transition: Transition Planning](#): This website provides links to several resources to assist with quality transition planning. These resources include matrices of effective practices, an annotated bibliography on the Summary of Performance (SOP) process, and two examples of SOP forms.

[Transition Age Youth With Mental Health Challenges in the Juvenile Justice System](#): This Juvenile Justice Resource Series report presents information to support the planning and implementation of effective services, policies, and practices that improve outcomes for young adults of transition age who are involved in or at risk of involvement with the juvenile justice system as well as their families.

[Youth With Disabilities in Juvenile Corrections \(Part 2\): Transition and Reentry to School and Community](#): This module is based on the *Guiding Principles for Providing High Quality Education in Juvenile Justice Secure Care Facilities*, which is part of the guidance package released by the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Justice. It addresses considerations and recommendations for transitioning youth from juvenile justice facilities back to community, school, and workplace settings.

Prioritizing Family Involvement Involvement and buy-in from those who are most affected by the transition plan (i.e., youth and their families) is essential to give the plan the greatest chance of success. Family support is a powerful, preventive mechanism that also can support youth resiliency¹⁷ and has a significant impact on the successful reentry of youth from a correctional facility. Family involvement is essential, yet within the incarcerated youth population, parents often are not fully involved in their child's education.¹⁸ Barriers to family involvement include a lack of information conveyed to parents in an understandable manner, a lack of resources, and the interest level of certain parents.¹⁹ Care must be taken to not only lessen these burdens but also actively address them in a culturally competent and respectful manner.²⁰ An example of typical family involvement includes getting families to participate in activities at schools; however, because of the challenges of detention, facilities need to allow for and promote alternative means of involvement, including the possibility of surrogate caregivers if parental involvement is not possible.^{21,22} Engaging youth with disabilities and their families in transition planning should include the use of self-assessments along with need, preference, and interest assessment data, which can be factored into goal creation and planning for postsecondary outcomes within an IEP.^{23,24}

Specific Resources

[*Getting Ready for When Your Teen Reaches the Age of Majority: A Parent's Guide*](#): This Web-based tip sheet provides guidance for parents of youth who are transitioning to young adults. The information can be useful for parents of youth at this age who also are transitioning from correctional facilities to postsecondary education or community settings.

[*PACER Center Juvenile Justice Program*](#): The PACER Center's Juvenile Justice Project serves parents and professionals in Minnesota through individual advocacy, training, and the ongoing development of new resources. This webpage includes links to a variety of resources that parents in all States may find useful.

[*Parent and Family Involvement Annotated Bibliography*](#): This annotated bibliography defines the role of parent and family involvement in transition planning and describes what this means in practice. It includes annotated links to a variety of resources to assist families with supporting youth in making successful transitions.

[*Reaching out to Parents of Youth With Disabilities in the Juvenile Justice System*](#): This webpage describes the goals for parents of youth with disabilities in the juvenile justice system, the barriers to their involvement, and the ways that professionals can overcome these obstacles to partner with parents and improve outcomes for these youth.

[*Successfully Transitioning Youth From Secure Care Back to School*](#): This multimedia resource examines what it takes to help youth make the transition from secure care to academic success in community schools. The video features agency, facility, and public school staff sharing their experiences with successful transitions.

[*Working With Families of Children in the Juvenile Justice and Corrections Systems: A Guide for Education Program Leaders, Principals, and Building Administrators*](#): This report provides guidelines for juvenile justice directors and school leaders to consider related to engaging families in the corrections and reentry process. It includes a list of recommended resources.

Coordinated Aftercare Services Students who receive appropriate aftercare services, including educational supports, immediately after release are three times more likely to remain lawfully in the community after 12 months.²⁵ This includes educational record transfers that are accurate, timely, confidential, and complete.²⁶ This records transfer must be compliant with relevant State and Federal laws and must contain all IDEA-mandated documents in the IEP.^{27,28} Aftercare services should be evidence based and include wraparound services, such as school re-enrollment programs, mentoring, using transition coordinators, and parental skill development.²⁹ The best aftercare services should be coordinated with strategic partners to ensure a seamless transition from facilities to home, communities, and school settings.^{30,31}

Specific Resources

[Best Practice Recommendations for County Provided Aftercare: Toolkit for Youth Leaving a Juvenile Correctional Institution](#): This toolkit describes Wisconsin’s three-phase, best practice model for the successful reentry of youth into their home communities. It includes a section on specific supports for youth with disabilities.

[Check & Connect: A Comprehensive Student Engagement Intervention](#): This webpage describes a comprehensive intervention program designed to enhance student engagement at school and learning for students who are marginalized or disengaged in Grades K–12, through relationship building, problem solving, capacity building, and persistence. A goal of Check & Connect is to foster school completion with academic and social competence.

[Mentoring Toolkit: Resources for Developing Programs for Incarcerated Youth](#): This resource from NDTAC provides information, program descriptions, and links to important resources that can assist juvenile detention facilities and other organizations in designing effective mentoring programs for youth who are neglected and delinquent, particularly those who are incarcerated.

[National Center on Education, Disability and Juvenile Justice: Transition/Aftercare](#): This webpage is focused on supporting the transition of youth from correctional facilities to postschool activities and helping them avoid re-offending. The links included describe promising practices for developing and implementing transition plans for students with disabilities in the juvenile justice system.

[National Institute of Justice: Community Corrections](#): This webpage contains key information about community corrections services available to juvenile offenders, including probation and parole. It includes information on the newest technologies to ensure that these practices are carried out effectively.

[National Reentry Resource Center \(NRRC\)](#): NRRC serves as the primary source for information and guidance in reentry, advancing the use of evidence-based practices and policies and creating a network of practitioners, researchers, and policymakers invested in reducing recidivism. This webpage includes a one-page information sheet that introduces the NRRC’s work.

[Reentry Programs for Students With Disabilities in the Juvenile Justice System: Four State Approaches](#): This information brief describes the Federal and four State-level reentry programs that offer comprehensive programs and supports to help juvenile offenders experience successful reentry into their home schools and communities. It describes each program and identifies the common themes among them.

Referring Youth in Juvenile Justice Settings to Mentoring Programs: Effective Strategies and Practices to Improving the Mentoring Experience for At-Risk and High-Risk Youth: A Resource Compendium:

This article describes a research study conducted by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). The OJJDP study captured data from mentoring and juvenile justice settings to provide a deeper understanding of how youth are referred to mentoring, challenges faced during the referral process, examples of effective strategies for facing the challenges, and action steps.

Successful Adulting: My Must-Have Papers: This video and associated tip sheet explain, in easy-to-understand terms, the most important documents that youth transitioning to adulthood need. It covers, for example, the documents needed to apply for a job, obtain a driver's license, open a bank account, or be prepared for emergencies.

Summary of the Wraparound Evidence Base (April 2010 Update): This resource guide from the National Wraparound Initiative summarizes the findings of nine research studies on wraparound services, or team-based, coordinated, family-driven care targeted at youth involved with multiple systems, including juvenile justice, special education, foster care, and mental health.

South Carolina Reintegration Initiative Program Manual: The South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice launched its Reintegration Initiative in response to a Federal initiative designed to address the complex issues associated with successfully returning incarcerated youth to the community. This guide describes the State's comprehensive plan to reverse recidivism and dependency trends and help reentering youth have outcomes that are more successful.

The Risk-Need-Responsivity Model: This brief from the National Cadre of Mentoring Researchers outlines a model for mentoring professionals to structure their assessment practices and treatment program design in correctional treatment interventions. The goal of the program is to provide administrators with guidance in designing programs to promote critical behavioral changes.

U.S. Department of Education Reentry Education Model: This guide puts forth a correctional education reentry model that uses an education continuum to bridge the gap between prison and community-based education and training programs.

This document was retrieved from a Web-based resource on the topic of juvenile corrections. For more information and additional resources, please visit <http://osepideasthatwork.org/jj>.

Endnotes

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