

TAY Reentry

Reentry

Young people leaving juvenile justice residential placement face many concerns as they reenter the community, home, and school/workforce. Reentry refers to those activities and tasks that prepare youth placed out-of-home for reentry into their families and communities. To improve the odds of success for youth reentering the community, the justice system, related agencies, and communities must plan for what needs to occur for reentry when youth enter the juvenile justice system. Therefore coordination and collaboration between agencies and across services and supports are necessary at multiple phases of reentry. The four main phases are the following:

- **The entry phase:** The moment the youth enters residential placement
- **The placement phase:** The time the youth is in the secure care facility
- **The transitional phase:** The actual act of leaving the facility and reentering the community, which is immediately before and immediately after the date of exit
- **The community-based aftercare phase:** Usually the 120-day (or longer) period of time after a youth returns to the community

Successful reentry programs and practices should ensure the delivery of prescribed services and supervision in the community. Specifically, “by fostering improved family relationships and functioning, reintegration into school, and mastery of independent life skills, youth build resiliency and positive development to divert them from delinquent and other problematic behaviors. There are many factors that should be considered when planning for reentry. The literature confirms that successful reentry plans, services, and supports should address at least these five issues:

- **Family:** What services and supports are needed to ensure family and home stability, skill development, and healing of damaged relationships?
- **Substance abuse:** What services and supports promote a reduction or cessation of substance use and/or abuse?
- **Peer association/friends:** What services and supports need to be in place to promote positive use of leisure time, prevent gang involvement, and discourage association with peers engaged in delinquent activities?
- **School conflict and achievement:** What services are in place to promote the transference of educational records and placement in the appropriate school settings that will support educational success and achievement?

- **Mental, behavioral, and physical health:** What services and supports are in place to address mental health, social/behavioral concerns, and/or chronic health problems?

Transition Planning and Reentry

Incorporating a reentry perspective in all aspects of facility programming and operations can help minimize the harmful effects of removal and increase the likelihood of sustainable and successful reintegration of youth back into the community. Fundamental concepts that can guide practice:

- Programs and operations of confinement facilities must be viewed in the context of the larger juvenile justice system; that is, detention and correctional facilities are part of a process, not just places.
- The mission for confinement facilities should purposefully and clearly articulate the importance of preparing youth to become contributing members of their community upon their return, even if the facility has responsibility for youth for a short period of time.
- Consistent with that mission, every aspect of confinement programs should be designed and evaluated through the lens of how well they meet that goal. This requires changing the focus of institution programs from simply managing youth inside the facility to promoting skills that lead to successful reentry.
- Transitions for youth into and out of programs should be as seamless as possible; that is, efforts to redirect youth are more likely to succeed when youth experience consistent expectations, services, and supports as they move into, through, and out of confinement facilities.
- Confinement facility professionals need to respect and elevate the important role that others (parents, mentors, other caretakers, teachers, the faith community) play in the lives of youth in confinement and the likelihood of success for youth. Programs need to find ways to engage those support systems as part of an overall case plan in which everyone is working together toward the same goals.
- Confinement facilities have to push the envelope on ways to develop individualized plans and programs rather than maintain a one-size-fits-all approach to policies, programs, and practices within the facility.

The result of using these concepts to guide practice leads to programs that look different in a myriad of ways from the programs—short and long term—that take a more traditional or institutional approach to confinement. Examples of differences:

- Defining staff roles and providing appropriate training and supervision for all staff—no matter what official role they play—in a way that elevates the importance of all interactions with youth to be part of a reentry mission.
- Developing behavior management systems that promote healthy cognitive and decision-making skills in youth that can be applied to situations they will face in the community.

- Implementing behavior management systems that hold youth accountable for misbehaviors by focusing on restorative practices that promote youth understanding of the impact of their behavior on others and give them a role in repairing harm.
- Evaluating the degree to which programs proactively engage and integrate the youth's community in providing services and creating linkages that can be maintained as the youth returns to the community.
- Examining how youth are involved in setting both short- and long-term goals as an active member in planning for their own future.

Practitioners who are truly committed to assisting youth with experiencing successful reentry will find ways to incorporate these concepts and opportunities into facility programming and will support staff in learning new skills or transitioning to new roles that promote sustainable pro-social changes for youth in confinement.

Five Key Components for Successful Reentry:

- Integrating the science of adolescent brain development into the design of reentry initiatives.
- Ensuring that reentry initiatives build on youth strengths and assets to promote pro-social development.
- Engaging families and community members in a meaningful manner throughout the reentry process.
- Prioritizing education and employment as essential elements of a reentry plan.
- Providing a stable, well-supported transition to adulthood that helps to create lifelong connections.

Reentry Team Responsibilities:

- Gathering input from other facility staff related to the youth's progress in learning skills that will be needed in the community.
- Serving as the point of contact and coordination for community resources (e.g., treatment resources) that are already engaged or will be engaged when the youth returns to the community.
- Connecting with parents or caretakers and engaging them in the planning process as well as identifying other family members that may be helpful.
- Identifying other supports for reentry such as mentors, faith community members, and other pro-social adults.
- Ensuring that the educational components of a transition plan are being properly developed and that appropriate information-sharing and enrollment supports will be in place.

Others Within the Facility That Need to be Involved as Part of a Reentry Team:

- Educational staff responsible for providing input into the plan and supporting the transition by gathering and sharing information with future educators.
- Treatment staff that have been involved in working with the youth on particular issues, such as mental health, AODA, or other behavioral issues.
- Supervision staff or supervisors who can help develop a plan by focusing on issues related to youth behavior within the facility, response to interventions by adults, and trigger issues that could result in setbacks.

Individuals from Outside the Facility That Will Support a Youth's Successful Reentry:

- Parents, other caretakers, or relatives who will play a significant role in the youth's return.
- Community programs or providers who will engage with the youth by providing specific treatment, employment, or other pro-social supports.
- Educators who will be working with the youth when he or she returns to the community.
- Mentors or other pro-social adults who can help provide both support and a sense of accountability for the youth in the community.

Making a Reentry Team Work - Evaluating the Process Might Include the Following Questions:

- What voice does the youth have in the process? Does the youth have an equal voice on the team?
- What about parents or caretakers? Are there efforts to ensure they are at the table when discussions occur or when decisions are made that affect their child?
- Who makes decisions? Is it simply the probation officer who has ultimate authority, or is there a collaborative decision-making process to deal with issues as they arise?

References

Youth.Gov - [Reentry](#)

National Institute of Corrections - [Transition Planning & Reentry](#)

National Technical Assistance Center for the Education of Neglected or Delinquent Children and Youth - [Transition Tool Kit 3.0](#)