

Juvenile Justice Fact Sheet Series: Reentry

March 2015

Prevention

Diversion

Community-
Based
Alternatives

Community
Corrections
Facilities

Detention

Juvenile
Correctional
Facilities

Parole/
Probation

Reentry

Adult System

What Is Reentry?

In the juvenile justice system, reentry refers to the process and experience of transitioning youth from secure juvenile settings back to schools, families, and communities. Juvenile reentry is unique from adult reentry because youth are simultaneously experiencing two types of transition: one from confinement back to the community and the other from adolescence to adulthood. Although the legal age of majority in most states is 18, a child does not automatically become an “adult” in thinking and behavior because the brain is not fully developed during adolescence, leaving youth vulnerable to less-reasoned decision making and peer pressure.

As a result, youth transitioning from secure facilities face significant barriers in reestablishing themselves in society and cannot be expected to do so alone. At its core, successful juvenile reentry encompasses the belief that youth have strengths that must be developed for their successful return home.

Research on Reentry:

Reentry is critical to the juvenile justice system. National studies show that up to 70% of youth who do not receive reentry services reoffend. After one year of being released, 70% of all reentering youth are out-of-school and unemployed. The common challenges reentering youth face that contribute to these statistics are: (1) lack of stable *housing*, (2) *educational* barriers, (3) lack of access to *healthcare and treatment*, (4) *adolescence*, and (5) separation from *family and supports* while in a locked facility. Data show that access to education is one of the most important factors in a youth’s successful reentry; in one study, over half of youth in juvenile detention had not completed the eighth grade and two-thirds of those leaving formal custody did not return to school. Meaningful employment also can help individuals successfully transition as it refocuses their time and efforts on pro-social activities and makes them less likely to engage in risky behaviors or interact with criminal associates.

Six emerging themes youth reentry policies and best practices include:

- Integrating the science of adolescent brain development into the design of reentry initiatives.
- Ensuring that reentry initiatives build on youths’ 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.
- Ensuring the reentry process begins at the time the youth is sentenced.

Studies have found that youth who receive reentry services with mentoring achieved better or improved outcomes in the following areas as compared to youth who simply received traditional probation services: significant reductions in testing positive for drug usage; lower recidivism; for those who did reoffend, longer time before their first re-offense; increased referrals and connection to educational and employment services; and increased referrals and connection to mental health treatment.

Reentry in Ohio:

Ohio's approach to reentry has changed significantly over the past decade. The Department of Youth Service's (DYS) total population is down from over 2,600 in May 1992 to just over 450 in 2015 due in part to initiatives to divert youth from DYS facilities and empower juvenile courts to place youth in smaller facilities closer to the youth's home.

These initiatives also enabled juvenile courts to explore evidence-based reentry services for returning youth. In some of the most effective cases, counties have formed collaborations between locked facilities and reentry providers leading to a continuum of services. For example, a study of RECLAIM funded programs shows that recidivism rates of youth who participated in reentry services, such as Wrap Around services, mentors, community services and youth intervention groups, are significantly lower than youth not enrolled in reentry services.

Ohio's focus on reentry has also resulted in the formation of reentry coalitions at the state and county level. These coalitions are designed to reintegrate reentry youth back into their home communities, reduce recidivism, and maintain public safety. For example, Lucas County's Reentry Coalition utilizes community buy in, developing stakeholder partnerships, family involvement and beginning the reentry process at disposition for better results in recidivism rates and reentry planning. Lucas County opened a Transition Reentry Center to serve as a one stop for all youth reentering society in the region. In addition, the state-wide Ohio Ex-Offender Reentry Coalition has a juvenile branch dedicated to youth reentry issues. DYS recently received a Second Chance Act planning grant to help further develop reentry programs throughout the state.

Costs: Reentry services in Ohio are often community-based, therefore funding for services come from a variety of sources and requires coordination among several social service agencies to provide holistic, wrap-around services. These programs are funded by the federal and state funding and grants as well as donations.

Outcomes and Recidivism: For youth released from DYS facilities in 2010, over the course of three years an increasingly higher percentage of these youth recidivated, rising from 22.7% of the youth released in 2010 recidivating one year after release to 37.2% two years after release and ending at 45% three years after release. While it is difficult to attribute these numbers to a particular factor, positive reentry services have been shown to reduce recidivism rates.

Conclusion:

The overall goal for reentry is for youth to achieve educational and employment accomplishments, while learning skills to maintain their new pro-social role in the community after all services have been terminated. These accomplishments lead to long term personal success, reintegration of youth in communities, decreased rates of recidivism, and increased public safety. Effective reentry services should be holistic and provide a continuum of intensity levels that empower youth to develop and maintain a new productive role within the community. Services work to increase the youth's internal motivation for change and gives them a chance to try out new skills and roles that promote rehabilitation, progressively increased responsibility, and freedom in the community.

Resources:

Children's Law Center, Inc., *Fact Sheet I Exploring Reentry: Creating a Continuum of Care to Support Ohio's Youth* (2011), available at <http://www.ispconsults.com/assets/reentry.pdf>.

Bilchik, Shay, *Five Emerging Practices in Juvenile Entry*, National Reentry Resource Center Advisory Committee on Juvenile Justice (June 13, 2011) available at <http://csgjusticecenter.org/youth/posts/five-emerging-practices-in-juvenile-reentry/>.

Ohio Department of Youth Services, *2014 Recidivism Report: An Examination of the Reincarceration Rates of Youth Released from Juvenile Correctional Facilities of the Ohio Department of Youth Services* (2014), p. 2-3.

J.A. Bouffard and K.J. Bergseth, *The Impact of Reentry Services on Juvenile Offenders' Recidivism*, *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice* 6 (2008): 295-318.

Recommendations to Improve Correctional and Reentry Education for Young People (April 29, 2013) at http://www.jlc.org/sites/default/files/publication_pdfs/Recs%20to%20Improve%20Correctional%20and%20Reentry%20Ed%20for%20Young%20People.pdf.

Joe Graffam, Alison Shinkfield, Barbara Lavelle, and Wenda McPherson, *Variables Affecting Successful Reintegration as Perceived by Offenders and Professionals*, *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation* 40, no.1/2 (2004):147-171

Youth Reentry Task Force of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Coalition, *Back on Track: Supporting Youth Reentry from Out-of-Home Placement to the Community* (2009) pg 28.

This fact sheet is one of a fact sheet series about Ohio's juvenile justice system by the Ohio Juvenile Justice Association.

If you have any questions, please visit [OJJA's website] or contact Erin Davies with the Juvenile Justice Coalition at edavies@jjohio.org or 614-400-5548.