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## ISSUE BRIEF:

# Professional Development: Focusing on Transition

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## **The National Technical Assistance Center for the Education of Neglected or Delinquent Children and Youth**

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## Goals of NDTAC Professional Development Briefs

In 2017, the National Technical Assistance Center for the Education of Neglected or Delinquent Children and Youth (NDTAC) released its first in a series of professional development briefs that focus on the professional development needs and interests of Neglected or Delinquent (N or D) State coordinators, correctional educators, and providers of Title I, Part D (Part D) programs and services. These briefs are intended to inform the planning, designing, and delivery of professional development for individuals working in Part D and correctional education programs. The goals of the briefs are to raise awareness and understanding of how professional development can enhance the quality of Part D services, build capacity for staff charged with addressing the needs of youth who find themselves in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, and improve outcomes for this population of youth.

The first brief highlighted the key characteristics of effective professional development and emphasized the importance of ensuring professional development was responsive to the characteristics of the N or D population. This second professional development brief seeks to increase practitioners' knowledge about effective transition planning for youth moving into, through, and out of the juvenile justice system, as well as to present ideas for professional development offerings that focus on the topic of transition. The brief also presents insights that emerged during conversations with N or D State Coordinators and Part D subgrantees and examples of effective approaches to transition planning and implementation across the various stages and components that play a role in providing high-quality transition services.

## Why Transition Planning Matters

Cavendish's 2013 study of academic attainment during commitment and post-release outcomes of juvenile justice system-involved youth points to a significant correlation between the lack of academic attainment for these youth and the likelihood of future involvement with the criminal justice system. The correlation is established by linking research that indicates that between 70 percent and 85 percent of juvenile justice-involved youth, either in the system or after release, do not ultimately attain a high school diploma or general education development diploma (Juvenile Justice Education

Enhancement Project, 2007). National data reveal that 80 percent of all crimes are committed by people who drop out of school, and 41 percent of adults incarcerated in State and Federal prisons do not have a high school diploma (Leone, Hyman, Meisel, & Riley, 2003, p. 42).

The juxtaposition of these statistics convincingly argue in favor of devoting resources to providing juvenile justice system-involved youth with the right supports to help them reach the important milestone of obtaining a high school diploma and getting on a trajectory that leads to postsecondary enrollment and training or a career. Bullis, Yovanoff, Mueller and Havel's (2002) longitudinal study of community reintegration for 531 youth in Oregon highlights the importance of educational attainment for juvenile justice system-involved youth. They found that youth who completed career or vocational courses while in custody were more than two times as likely to be engaged in school or employment 6 months after release than youth who did not complete these courses during commitment. In addition, engagement in school or employment at 6 months postrelease increased the likelihood that youth were engaged 12 months postrelease (Cavendish, 2013).

In focus groups conducted by Mathur and Griller Clark in 2014, several specific barriers to achieving juvenile justice system-involved youth's reentry goals were identified. These barriers included lack of parental involvement, lack of transportation, lack of sufficient life skills programming, problems with records transfer, and the lag time between release and the onset of other services. The fact that child welfare, education systems, employment data systems, and juvenile justice information systems are rarely integrated makes it difficult to accurately track outcomes for juvenile justice-involved students (Cavendish, 2013). The duty to improve outcomes for juvenile justice-involved youth has led to efforts to implement more comprehensive approaches that seek to provide youth with systematic continuity of care through every distinct phase of the transition process. Overarching case management strategies are being adopted that start at admission to an out-of-home placement and end when the youth is back living in the community without any formal or official justice system jurisdiction (Altschuler & Bilchick, 2014).

The term *transition* is used for the continuous process that starts when the youth is removed from his or her community school and the movement within and between one of four distinct stages

begins. The four stages are (1) entry into the juvenile justice system, (2) residence or incarceration, (3) reentry or exit from a residential facility, and (4) aftercare or progress monitoring of a youth upon enrollment in his or her home-base school (Osher, Banks Amos, & Gonsoulin, 2012). It is imperative for the youth and his or her family members or guardians to be involved in the process. The transition plan should be written with, not for, the youth and the family (Griller Clark, Mathur, Brock, O'Cummings, & Milligan, 2016). Transition involves a true team effort, in which the youth, their parents, the transition specialist, parole officers, school staff, and providers with a stake in the community need to share their perception about what it looks like to be engaged with the youth. The team must form a consensus view of what conditions are likely to keep the youth engaged and how they need to go about creating those conditions together (Leone & Weinberg, 2010).

## Effective Transition Planning

An effective transition for youth in the juvenile justice system has been defined as requiring "a coordinated set of activities for the youth, designed within an outcome-oriented process, which promotes successful movement from the community to a correctional program setting, and from a correctional program setting to post-incarceration activities" (Griller Clark et al., 2016, p. 2).

## Key Concepts

- **Coordination and collaboration** among multiple individuals in the secure setting, often including individuals from other youth-serving agencies and/or service providers, are required to develop the necessary support network and wraparound services in the form of an individualized plan for each youth involved in the juvenile justice system to ensure they receive the educational and support services that are responsive to their individual needs (Griller Clark et al., 2016).
- **Outcome-oriented process** that focuses and defines the youth's goals for successful engagement with school and/or employment, avoidance of return to the juvenile justice system, and reduce the likelihood of future entry into the adult criminal justice system (Griller Clark et al., 2016).

- **Successful movement between the facility and the community** requires awareness of all the systems and policies in place to help support the youth in navigating these systems and becoming positively engaged with his or her community. It also involves the successful movement of records and processes to facilitate and help the youth obtain the needed sustained supports he or she needs to prepare for college or a career (Griller Clark et al., 2016).

### Consider Population Demographics

Students who participate in N or D programs have characteristics that differentiate them from the students in traditional education settings. Based on nationally reported data for the 2013–14 school year (NDTAC, 2015), students participating in N or D programs were:

- **Disproportionately male.** Male students account for 84 percent of the population served by Subpart 1 and 73 percent of the population served by Subpart 2.
- **Disproportionately minority.** Minority students account for 66 percent of the population served by Subpart 1 and 67 percent of the population served by Subpart 2.
- **Disproportionately eligible for special education services.** Significant portions of participating students qualify for special education services. Students with disabilities account for 32.3 percent of the population served by Subpart 1 and 30.5 percent of the population served by Subpart 2.

The demographic composition of the N or D population suggests that the population would be best served by transition support networks that incorporate the following elements:

- **Cultural and linguistic competence.** Cultural and linguistic competence is individual and organizational. In an individual sense, cultural competence involves the capacity to look reflectively beyond one's own framework and treat individuals on a one-on-one basis, while respecting and acknowledging their cultural beliefs and values (Osher et al., 2012). In an organizational sense, cultural competence involves a set of congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, in a school, in an agency, or among professionals and enable that system, school, agency, or those professionals to work effectively in bicultural or

multicultural contexts (Osher, Banks Amos, & Gonsoulin, 2012).

- Cultural and linguistic competence can help educators differentiate instruction in a manner that will better engage linguistically and culturally diverse student populations. This competence can also help educators develop and implement alternative approaches to student engagement and discipline.
- As the youth begins the first stage of transitioning into a secured setting, it is important to provide the youth and the youth's family with a culturally comfortable setting. This step is crucial to reducing anxiety the youth and family may feel when encountering the correctional system. Moreover, a setting that is culturally comfortable for the youth and the youth's family will help educators and providers engage the youth, parents, and others involved with the youth in becoming engaged in the work of supporting a positive return of the youth to his or her community (Osher & Huff, 2006). Examples for culturally comfortable settings include having available trained interpreters who speak the same language as family members, allowing families to bring their own types of food for the youth, and providing students with grooming supplies that are suited to their skin and hair type. Facility educators and personnel need to understand the physical and cultural community from which the family and the youth come from and to where most likely the youth will return.
  - The Oregon Youth Authority's Office of Inclusion and Intercultural Relations (OIRR) provides a model of a systemwide effort to guide and coordinate culturally and linguistically competent transition supports for system-involved youth and their families. OIRR works with youth, their families, staff, contractors, and volunteers to develop culturally appropriate programs and services. For example, OIRR provides interpretation and translation assistance to youths and families; supports youth empowerment programs; and coordinates speakers, educational presentations, and special events at Oregon Youth Authority's (OYA) close-custody facilities that celebrate diversity and raise cross-cultural awareness. OIRR implements these programs in partnership with stakeholders such as OYA's African-American Advisory Committee, Latino Advisory Committee, Native American Advisory Committee, LGBTQ and nongender

specific advocacy groups, and other state partners. OIRR's goal is to ensure that all youth leaving OYA have the specific cultural supports they need to successfully reintegrate back into their communities and lead productive lives.<sup>1</sup>

- **Strong special education services component.** Clear policies and procedures across and within agencies and facilities involved are necessary to effectively secure the youth's relevant student records and individualized education programs from a previously attended school. Obtaining student records in a timely manner improves the capacity of educators and providers to deliver effective special educational services to youth with learning disabilities and/or emotional disturbances. Eligibility for special education services under IDEA extends until youth reach the maximum age of entitlement identified by state law, no longer require special education, or graduate from high school with a regular diploma (34 C.F.R. §300.122 (a)(3)). IDEA also permits modification of the individualized education program for juveniles in adult facilities based on demonstrated security concerns that cannot otherwise be accommodated (Leone & Weinberg, 2012).
- **Systematic continuity of care after release.** Altschuler and Bilchik (2014) indicated that what it takes to succeed specifically in placement is not necessarily what it takes to succeed in the community. They highlighted that it is important for the facility staff and partners to create a transition plan that includes all the supports the youth will need to succeed while in the facility as well as an aftercare plan for providing the required supports upon the youth's return to the community (p. 9).
 

The Juvenile Justice Youth Reentry Task Force identified a set of guiding principles and practices for effective juvenile justice reentry programs. These practices should continue at least one year past release from secure care and must minimally include (a) pre-release planning in facilities; (b) individualized services that address developmental deficits; (c) housing support in the community; (d) family connections; (e) access to mental health and substance abuse treatment; (f) structured workforce preparation, employment, and school attendance; and (g) better use of youth's leisure time (Nellis & Hooks Wayman, 2009).



“You can’t just turn a kid loose back where he or she came from. You may think he or she has changed while they are with you. They may think they have changed. But when they get sent back to their community, they often find that nothing there has changed. There has to be a wide variety of services in the community to help them stay on course with their plan.”

**Title I, Part D Subgrantee, Kentucky**

- The San Francisco Juvenile Collaborative Reentry Team provides a good example of an interagency partnership developed to improve the outcomes of youth returning from long-term commitments that has proven to be effective. This partnership brings together components of the San Francisco Juvenile Probation, the Public Defender, the Center for Juvenile and Criminal Justice and Superior Court of California into a fully staffed probation unit called the Juvenile Collaboration Reentry Unit. The Juvenile Collaboration Reentry Unit has a dedicated reentry court with attorneys who develop and oversee intensive reentry plans for youth returning from a range of long-term commitments. Reentry plans are developed and approved by the reentry court up to 90 days in advance of the youth’s release. At a minimum the plan must address the following factors:
  - » School assignment and placement prior to release date;
  - » Advocacy by defense attorney, social worker and case manager for current Individual Plans for special education youth;
  - » Family reintegration and counseling to be provided prior to and after release;
  - » Assessment and provision of individualized counseling, such as substance abuse, anger management, behavioral and mental health needs;
  - » Consideration of vocational readiness and employment opportunities; and provision of gender-specific services to meet the special needs of girls.

Each component must be addressed in the reentry plan. The youth will not return to the community until all those elements are in place and the plan is vetted by the entire team.<sup>2</sup>

### Effective Transition Plans Consider Mental Health Needs

Practitioners who observe the external manifestation of a potential mental health condition, such as anger and hopelessness, can take action to refer an undiagnosed student for mental health screening. Because undiagnosed youth with internalizing disorders, such as anxiety, may be less likely to act out, their mental health conditions may not be identified or diagnosed as often or as quickly (Undheim, Lydersen, & Kayed, 2016). Mental health issues that are undiagnosed will go untreated. Untreated mental health conditions are likely to worsen or lead to more involved diagnoses over time, adversely impacting life outcomes (Erickson, 2012).

The high rates of mental illness among the N or D population suggest that the population would be best served by transition plans that meet the following conditions:

- Foster effective interagency coordination and collaboration in order to ensure that at the entry stage of transition mental health services and substance abuse programs are available and proper screenings and evaluations are conducted as early as possible in the transition process.
- Take into account the fact that when youth have an emotional or behavioral disorder their needs are even further exacerbated and their families generally require a considerable range of services and supports (Garfinkel, 2010, p. 53).

“Many kids in these settings have been exposed to so much violence. They’ve been in a war zone; they join a gang for protection. They need to get the psychological treatment to help them. If they can get the psychological help and a list of things and priorities that they are trying to achieve, they will achieve it.”

**Title I, Part D Subgrantee, North Carolina**

### Effective Transition Plans Consider Exposure to Trauma

Traumatic stressors have been defined as events and circumstances that are life threatening or violations of bodily integrity and that evoke reactions of extreme fear, helplessness, or horror (American Psychiatric Association, 2000, p. 424). Researchers have catalogued 10 adverse childhood experiences as risk factors for chronic disease in adults and other long-term adverse effects such as posttraumatic stress disorder. These 10 adverse childhood experiences are emotional abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional neglect, physical neglect, violent treatment toward mother, household substance abuse, household mental illness, parental separation or divorce, and having an incarcerated household member.

In a recent study (Baglivio et al., 2014) of 64,329 juvenile offenders in Florida examining the prevalence of adverse childhood experience indicators in these youth found that 97 percent of them reported one or more adverse childhood experiences. Of these, 90 percent reported at least two, 73 percent reported at least three, 52 percent reported at least four, and 32 percent reported five or more.

Given the high likelihood that system-involved youth have experienced trauma and may exhibit symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder, the population would be best served by transition plans that include the following elements:

- Screening or assessment upon entry for trauma exposure and presence of posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms, and related evidence-based trauma-specific treatment for the youth and family.
- Professional development on trauma-informed approaches for educators and staff working with this population to help them understand the behaviors these youth demonstrate and the difference between types of defensive or aggressive behaviors that youth who have been impacted by trauma may display.

## Effective Transition Plans Consider Poverty

Research indicates there is a positive correlation between living in poverty and the tendency among youth to exhibit behavioral problems (Lucero, Barrett, & Jensen, 2015) and engage in delinquent behavior (Jarjoura, Triplett, & Brinker, 2002). Nearly three-quarters of youth entering juvenile courts come from families of poverty (Birkhead, 2012). Youth living in poverty tend to be in poorer physical health and have higher incidences of mental health and substance abuse issues (Anakwenze & Zuberi, 2013; Wolfe, 2011). They are also at increased risk for being overweight and demonstrating poor academic performance (Engle & Black, 2008).

Given the high rates of poverty, the population would be best served by transition plans that include the following elements:

- Supports accessing and navigating government assistance programs and, consequently, receive inadequate health and social services (Austin et al., 2004)
- Ongoing supports to counter the tendency to focus on current challenges and help them develop skills that support future planning (Marquis-Hobbs, 2014).

## Effective Transition Plans Consider Academic Difficulties

Systems-involved youth tend to have lower grades and lower standardized achievement scores and are more likely to be retained (Stone & Zibulsky, 2014). In addition, incarcerated youth have been found to have more truancies, grade retentions, and suspensions than the general population (Baltodano, Harris, & Rutherford, 2005). Socioeconomic factors, disabilities, mental health diagnoses, and school histories characterized by suspensions and dropping out are some possible reasons for poor academic achievement among youth (Leone & Weinberg, 2012).

Given the high rates of academic difficulties, the population would be best served by transition plans that include the following:

- Ongoing strategies to increase student motivation strategies, persistence, and self-regulation of effort (Stone & Zibulsky, 2014).

- Supports that help students better incorporate academic success into their personal identity (Matthews, 2014).
- Individualized instruction and extended opportunities to practice new skills (Reglin, Royster, & Losike-Sedimo, 2014). It also suggests youth may benefit from learning activities that provide scaffolding and supports that enable them to engage in the content, even if they are not reading on grade level.

## Effective Transition Plans Incorporate Monitoring Components

Griller Clark et al. (2016) stressed that it is vital to monitor the transition plan as it is being implemented and know when to modify if required. Facility staff and education staff should continue to monitor and track student progress across all domains and to update records on a regular basis in an effort to ensure accurate records are transferred upon release or movement to another facility. These updates should be used to inform the transition team and will ensure that when the youth leaves, his or her records will accurately reflect progress made, regardless of the amount of lead time given before the youth changes placement. More importantly, updates promote the continuation of needed supports and services after the youth is discharged. Improper or inefficient maintenance of records can impede transition when the youth leaves a facility. Documenting a youth's academic progress requires regular and consistent administration of assessments in mathematics, reading, and other academic areas in which instruction is provided.

## Professional Development on Transition Planning and Implementation

Educators, staff, and administrators of juvenile justice facilities at all levels have as part of their core mission to continually focus on how to best create and sustain a safe, healthy facility-wide climate that prioritizes education, provides the conditions for learning, and encourages the necessary behavioral and social support services that address the individual needs of all youths, including those with disabilities and English learners (U.S. Department of Education & U.S. Department of Justice, 2014). From a systemic perspective, professional development goals should be geared toward creating common understandings and

sharing of beliefs among practitioners about transition at each stage of the process. It should also serve to increase practitioners' knowledge and skills focusing on specific approaches for improving interagency coordination, providing supports that improve student academic outcomes, and developing effective collaborative connections with families and the community.

Next is a list of ideas to assist practitioners as they think and set goals for professional development focusing on transition planning and implementation.

## Ideas on Improving Coordination and Collaboration

- **Building transition teams, gathering the relevant parties and clearly defining roles and responsibilities.** Clear definitions of roles and responsibilities are vital elements to forming effective transition teams. A transition coordinator or specialist, educational advocate, case manager, or placement specialist should be designated to lead and coordinate the transition process. Others who should be involved in the process (based on the unique needs of the youth) include court and probation personnel; administrators, teachers, and staff from detention and corrections institutions; service providers from other agencies or programs (e.g., mental health, substance abuse, child welfare); and personnel from the community, including the community schools that the youth plans to return to and potential area employers.
- **Developing formal processes and procedures through statutes, memoranda of agreement, or memoranda of understanding.** These formal processes clearly state the provision and delineation of services to juvenile justice-involved youth served by multiple state agencies and the sharing of data, information, records, and integration of case management systems. Having a memorandum of understanding or statute focusing on transition may help to sustain and prescribe the necessary coordination and partnerships needed to support the youth and family in successful transition.
- **Conducting effective intake interviews.** The intake interview is vital to kick-start the transition process and obtain the information that will inform educators and staff as to the



“They [students] need to be an active part and know what they are working towards, they need to be given feedback on how they are doing. Their plans need to become something they want for themselves, not something they are doing because someone is making them do it.”

**N & D Coordinator**

and activities to help assess their effectiveness in achieving expected outcomes. Setting benchmarks and developing performance indicators for transition services and activities allow for conducting data-driven reviews to help inform and guide continuous improvement efforts that result in positive outcomes for system-involved youth.

levels of supports and services that the youth will need to transition into and out of the system successfully. The interviewer should obtain information on any previous services, educational attainment, language assistance services, special education, family dynamics, career and technical training, and work experience. The interviewer also should get a sense of the youth’s strengths, needs, and educational and career goals.

- **Developing effective communication channels that may result in increased interagency awareness.** Frequently, the providers or agencies that send youth to and receive youth from the juvenile justice system are unaware of the programs, policies, and practices within juvenile justice facilities. Regular communication between community service providers and the juvenile justice facilities and agencies that operate the facilities allows each to learn more about what the other provides and to identify practices that can more effectively assist youth while in placement and upon exit. When providers and community stakeholders increase their own understanding of existing juvenile justice programs and reentry practices, they will be more likely to help foster positive outcomes for youth (Mathur & Griller Clark, 2014). An example of this is co-training of staff across multiple child-serving agencies.

student choice-making (Cavendish, 2013). To help accomplish this, the facility can prioritize the youth’s preferences for services and routinely collect feedback on services received. The agency or facility can involve youth and family in advisory boards, as well as provide tangible resources that reduce barriers to engagement and partnering (bus pass, child care, etc.)

- **Use motivational strategies.** Students tend to respond well to approaches that provide them with explicit opportunities to make decisions about their academic and vocational course selections, noting the importance of allowing students to develop a sense of self-directed ownership of their learning. Program coordinators motivate students to earn high school diplomas with career-training programs—that is, students complete courses of study in a career-training program of their choice. As students complete the courses in the career program and earn the vocational certificates, they will make progress toward their diploma.
- **Build capacity to measure, analyze, collect, report, and use outcome data to guide ongoing system decisions** by investing in electronic case-management systems and establishing policies and procedures to guide data entry and use, including the required staff training and system supports to ensure data integrity, accessibility, sharing, and reporting.
- **Conduct needs assessments to identify specific facility-level supports** that will help ensure the student avoids returning to the juvenile justice system and to reduce the likelihood of future entry into the adult criminal justice system. An example of this strategy is conducting regular evaluations of transition services

- **Base supervision and resource allocation decisions on the results of validated risk and needs assessments.** Validated risk and needs assessments can provide effective tools to assess each youth’s risk for reoffending. Youth with results demonstrating lower risk levels are deemed less likely to reoffend, thereby allowing for resource allocation decisions to consider whether more intensive monitoring and interventions can be made available for youth at the highest risk levels. These tools can also assist in matching services to youth’s specific risk factors, such as learning disabilities, substance abuse, poor academic achievement, and lack of parental monitoring.

- **Improve understanding of and compliance with the following laws:**

- **Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Title VI)**  
Prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, and national origin in programs and activities receiving federal financial assistance.<sup>3</sup>
- **Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (Title IX)**  
Prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in any federally funded education program or activity. The principal objective of Title IX is to avoid the use of federal money to support sex discrimination in education programs and to provide individual citizens effective protection against those practices.<sup>4</sup>
- **Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**  
Prohibits State and local governments from refusing to allow a person with

## Ideas for Improving Outcomes

- **Include the youth’s voice.** For transition to be effective and the youth to be successful, the plan must be based on the youth’s interests, needs, and strengths. Often, the adults in the youth’s life believe they know what the best plan is for his or her transition; however, if the plan is reflective of what the youth wants, then the youth will more likely buy into the plan, increasing the chances that the plan and the youth will be successful. Best practices in both juvenile justice and special education transition include involvement in person centered planning and

“If I could wave a magic wand, I would make everyone at every level update in a timely manner our Student Information Systems so I could then track our kids better.”

— N & D Coordinator

a disability to participate in a service, program, or activity simply because the person has a disability.<sup>5</sup>

#### – **Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Section 504)**

Section 504 states that “no qualified individual with a disability in the United States shall be excluded from, denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under” any program or activity that either receives Federal financial assistance or is conducted by any Executive agency or the United States Postal Service.<sup>6</sup>

#### – **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**

This Federal law makes available a free appropriate public education to eligible children with disabilities throughout the nation and ensures special education and related services to those children. The IDEA governs how states and public agencies provide early intervention, special education, and related services to more than 6.5 million eligible infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities.<sup>7</sup>

#### – **Title I, Part D of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)**

The purpose Title I is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging State academic achievement standards and state academic assessments.<sup>8</sup>

- **Improve prerelease skill development training for youth.** In addition to the regular academic programming, prerelease transition training should include instruction in social skills, independent living skills, decision-making, and workplace skills—all corresponding to and supporting the youth’s transition plan. A comprehensive transition curriculum (such as Merging Two Worlds<sup>9</sup>) or course is frequently the best method for providing training in these areas. Developed by Arizona State University specifically for secure care populations, Merging Two Worlds provides a host of online resources such

as full curriculums, online courses and video series focused on life skills and transition (Griller Clark et al., 2016).

## **Ideas to Improve Connection With the Community**

- **Establish strong links** with public school districts and schools, community-based providers, employers, and others who can help reintegrate the youth to his or her school and the community. Examples include creating agency or facility advisory boards and working groups that promote stakeholder involvement and input that facilitates the exchange of information and identification of resources to best support the youth. Also, the creation of communities of practice among facility educators, personnel, and school district staff can be a way for greater connectivity across agencies and the community.
- **Formalize community partnerships.** Community-level partnerships can establish and sustain supports and services such as mentor and/or peer support programs. At or prior to exit, youth should be encouraged to find a mentor and/or peer group who can offer support during exit and once back in the community. Mentors and/or peer groups are frequently available from faith-based or other community-based organizations, such as Boys and Girls Clubs. Transition specialists or other transition team members should assist youth in seeking a mentor or peer support group if the youth feels it could aid in transition success.
- **Develop strategies for educators and staff to seek out and incorporate input directly from the youth and his or her family** (or adult advocate). An effective way to accomplish this is by the development of surveys and questionnaires designed to collect feedback from youth and their families on the services they are receiving. Also, reducing barriers to engagement and partnering such as providing access to students and parents to communicate

through services such as Skype, or providing on-site child care for visiting parents or siblings, may be strategies that promote family and parental feedback, input, and decision-making.

- **Design and implement a pre-release school visitation program.** For youth returning to school, just prior to exit, a visit to the receiving school and an admission interview should be conducted. Supportive schools will offer functional and appropriate placements and schedules that meet the needs of the youth and adhere to accommodations or modifications the student requires.

## **Conclusion**

This brief has presented key concepts to consider when planning transition services for youth moving into, through, and out of the juvenile justice system. The brief also presents professional development ideas on topics that are essential to effective transition planning and implementation for practitioners charged with the education and care of system-involved youth.

Effective transition planning must take into account the specific characteristics of the system-involved youth population. On a national level, minority males are disproportionately represented among system-involved youth. System-involved youth tend to be poor, have higher rates of mental health issues, and are more likely to have experienced trauma. Most students in juvenile justice settings have experienced academic difficulties, either due to learning disabilities or gaps in academic skills. Therefore, transition planning should consider the proper cultural and linguistic components in order to facilitate engagement with the youth and their families. The plans must also provide for the special education and mental health needs of the students while placing a great deal of focus in understanding and providing the specific supports the youths will need, and for how long, in order to thrive upon returning to their communities.

“A lot of youths and their families do not know how to navigate the school system; it’s all very mysterious to them. So it is important to provide them the supports they need to go from a secure setting where everything is being provided to them back to their school and community where they have to be more independent.”

**Title I, Part D Subgrantee, Missouri**



A comprehensive and cohesive approach to transition planning is vital to successfully reintegrate system-involved youth back into their communities and getting them on a trajectory that leads to postsecondary enrollment and training or a career that will enable them to lead productive lives. To achieve this goal, the youth's voice must be included and plans must be responsive to the individual youth's interests, needs, and strengths. From a systemic perspective, effective transition planning

and implementation involves orchestrating active interagency coordination and collaboration, delivering supports that improve student academic outcomes, developing positive connections with families, and establishing community partnerships. Through the effective and ongoing professional development activities suggested in this brief systems may improve transition outcomes for youth who are involved in the juvenile justice system.

Finally, this brief has identified several practices, topics, and treatment options that are aligned with the unique needs of youth who are system involved. Practical examples and models from the field for conceptualizing transition efforts have also been included.

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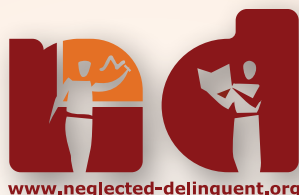
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## Notes

1. For more information about OIRR, visit <http://www.oregon.gov/oia/Pages/oms.aspx#About>.
2. For more information about Juvenile Collaboration Reentry Unit and the San Francisco Juvenile Collaborative Reentry Team, visit <http://www.sfsuperior-court.org/divisions/collaborative/jrc>.
3. For more information on Title VI, see <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/USCODE-2008-title42/html/USCODE-2008-title42-chap21-subchapV.htm>.
4. For more information on Title IX, see <https://www.justice.gov/crt/title-ix-education-amendments-1972>.
5. To read more about Title II, see <https://www.ada.gov/t2hlt95.htm>.
6. To read more about Section 504, see <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/504faq.html>.
7. To read more about IDEA, see <https://sites.ed.gov/idea/statuteregulations/>.
8. To read more about ESEA and ESSA, see <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg1.html#sec1001>.
9. For more information about Merging Two Worlds, see <http://merging2worlds.education.asu.edu/>.







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