

# TRANSITION TOOLKIT 2.0: MEETING THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF YOUTH EXPOSED TO THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

Prepared by the National Evaluation and Technical Assistance Center for  
the Education of Children and Youth who are Neglected, Delinquent,  
and At-Risk



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The mission of the National Evaluation and Technical Assistance Center for the Education of Children and Youth Who Are Neglected, Delinquent, or At Risk (NDTAC) is to improve educational programming for neglected and delinquent youth. NDTAC's legislative mandates are to develop a uniform evaluation model for State Education Agency (SEA) Title I, Part D, Subpart I programs; provide technical assistance (TA) to states in order to increase their capacity for data collection and their ability to use that data to improve educational programming for neglected or delinquent (N/D) youth; and serve as a facilitator between different organizations, agencies, and interest groups that work with youth in neglected and delinquent facilities. For additional information on NDTAC, visit the Center's Web site at <http://www.neglected-delinquent.org>

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- Dr. Heather Griller-Clark, Project Director, Arizona Detention Transition Project (ADTP) at Arizona State University
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- Jacque Reese, M.S.E., State Juvenile Education Initiative (JEDI) Coordinator for the Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education Unit
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# CONTENTS

<b>I. Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Organization of the Toolkit.....	1
Transition Interview Data Collection Methodology .....	2
<b>II. Overview of Transition.....</b>	<b>3</b>
Complexity of the Transition Process.....	3
Characteristics of Ineffective and Effective Transition Systems.....	5
Overview of Innovative Practices in Transition .....	7
Strategy One: Communicate Openly and Strategically With Other Individuals Involved in the Transition Process.....	7
Strategy Two: Develop a Transition Plan and Monitor Progress .....	8
Strategy Three: Provide a Range of Supports.....	9
Strategy Four: Conduct Regular and Comprehensive Evaluation of Transition Programs .....	9
Strategy Five: Allocate Adequate Funds to Transition Services .....	10
Records Transfer and Its Importance to Transition .....	10
Strategy One: Ensure Accurate, Complete, Useful, Timely, and Confidential Records and Record Transfer.....	11
Strategy Two: Identify Pertinent Federal, State, and Local Laws .....	11
Strategy Three: Collaborate and Communicate with All Involved Individuals and Agencies.....	12
Strategy Four: Develop and Use an Electronic Data System .....	13
Family Involvement and Its Importance to Transition .....	13
Strategy One: Help Parents Overcome Barriers, and Make the Environment Welcoming to Families .....	14
Strategy Two: Communicate With Families in a Way That is Comfortable and Accessible .....	14
Strategy Three: If Family Members Are Unable or Unwilling to Be Involved, Engage Others.....	15
Next Steps .....	15
<b>III. Stage 1: Entry Into the Justice System .....</b>	<b>16</b>
Introduction.....	16
What Works at This Stage: Innovative Practices.....	16
Strategy One: Conduct Intake Assessments .....	16
Strategy Two: Assemble a Transition Team and Develop a Transition Plan .....	16
Strategy Three: Clearly Define Roles and Responsibilities of Individuals and Agencies to Aid in Open Communication .....	17
Strategy Four: Track and Monitor the Youth’s Progress.....	17
Strategy Five: Refer the Youth to Diversion or Community-Based Programs, When Appropriate .....	18
A. Practices Specific to Records Transfer at Entry.....	18
Strategy One: Request Records That Will Allow Facility Staff to Make Appropriate Referrals and Provide Needed Services and Supports.....	19
Strategy Two: Identify a Single Person to Manage All Records Upon Entry .....	19
B. Practices Specific to Family Involvement at Entry .....	19

---

Strategy One: Make Support Systems Available to the Family .....	19
Strategy Two: Provide the Family With an Orientation to the School Program and the Educational Opportunities Available .....	20
Strategy Three: Request Family Help in Obtaining Educational Records .....	20
Next Steps .....	20
<b>IV. Stage 2: Residence.....</b>	<b>24</b>
Introduction.....	24
What Works at This Stage: Innovative Practices.....	24
Strategy One: Continue Activities Initiated at Entry .....	24
Strategy Two: Provide Pre-Release Training and Supports .....	24
Strategy Three: Ensure Appropriate Educational Placements .....	25
A. Practices Specific to Records Maintenance .....	25
Strategy One: Make Sure That Records Maintenance Procedures Are Written and Clearly Communicated to Staff .....	26
Strategy Two: Designate One Staff Member to be Responsible for Maintaining Records .....	26
Strategy Three: Regularly Update the Youth’s Records, Including Conducting Regular Assessments to Document Progress.....	26
Strategy Four: Send Progress Updates to the Family, the Home School, and Other Members of the Transition Team.....	27
B. Practices Specific to Family Involvement During Residency.....	27
Strategy One: Offer Programs to Family Members to Develop and Hone Their Parenting Skills .....	27
Strategy Two: Enhance Family Involvement Through Family Counseling .....	27
Strategy Three: Continue to Make the School Inviting to the Family .....	27
Next Steps .....	28
<b>V. Stage 3: Exit From Incarceration.....</b>	<b>30</b>
Introduction.....	30
What Works at This Stage: Innovative Practices.....	30
Strategy One: Begin Pre-Release Information Sharing .....	30
Strategy Two: Conduct a Pre-Release Visit to the School .....	31
Strategy Three: Start Transitional Counseling and Continue Mentoring .....	31
A. Practices Specific to Records Transfer at Exit.....	32
Strategy One: Release a Youth’s Records in a Timely and Secure Manner.....	32
Strategy Two: Use a Consistent Method for Transferring Educational Records.....	32
B. Practices Specific to Family Involvement at Exit .....	33
Strategy One: Engage the Family in All Decision-Making Processes .....	33
Strategy Two: Prepare the Family for Changes in Their Child .....	33
Strategy Three: Make the Transition Process as Gradual as Possible .....	33
Next Steps .....	33
<b>VI. Stage 4: Aftercare .....</b>	<b>35</b>
Introduction.....	35
What Works at This Stage: Innovative Practices.....	35
Strategy One: Provide Transitional Counseling .....	35
Strategy Two: Ensure Follow-Up and Monitoring .....	35
Strategy Three: Supply Wraparound Support Services .....	35

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A. Practices Specific to Following Up on Records During Aftercare .....	37
Strategy One: Collaborate and Communicate With Individuals and Agencies to Track Progress and Collect Follow-Up Data .....	37
B. Practices Specific to Family Involvement During Aftercare .....	37
Strategy One: Provide Continued Support to the Family .....	37
Next Steps .....	38
<b>VII. References.....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>Appendix A: Self-Study and Planning Tool .....</b>	<b>A-1</b>

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. The Juvenile Justice System and the Path to Incarceration.....	4
Figure 2. Key Players Involved in the Transition Process by Stage.....	5

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The second edition of the Transition Toolkit is a compilation of existing practices, strategies, and available resources on transition that build on field experience and research. The Toolkit offers practical information that enables State and local administrators and service providers to provide high-quality transition services for youth moving into, through, and out of education programs within the juvenile justice system.

Even seemingly simple communication efforts, such as inviting parents to visit their child's institutional school, can have a dramatic impact on a student's outcomes. Similarly, processes such as the timely transfer of student academic records can affect a child's engagement in school and the likelihood that the child will avoid further institutionalization. The focus of this document is therefore on the administrative processes, coordination efforts, and communication practices related to a youth's experience with the justice system. It offers ideas and tools that administrators can use to improve the basic functioning of their treatment and institution-based education programs. Although the Toolkit identifies many systems, agencies, and support services, its primary focus is on the *educational needs* of youth and those who directly provide education services.

### ORGANIZATION OF THE TOOLKIT

Section II of this document briefly addresses the topic of transition across three areas:

- The complexity of the transition process
- The characteristics of ineffective and effective transition systems
- Overarching strategies for successful transition

Sections III through VI each address a distinct stage of transition:

- Stage 1: Entry into the justice system
- Stage 2: Residence
- Stage 3: Exit from incarceration
- Stage 4: Aftercare

Each section provides stage-specific strategies to improve the transition process, including those to promote effective records transfer and maintenance and increased family involvement. The processes of records transfer and family involvement are specifically highlighted throughout this document to reflect the high volume of technical assistance requests that NDTAC has received on these topics.

Each section concludes with pertinent resources, such as sample forms, protocols, and tools currently used at each stage of the transition process. The Toolkit also contains a self-study and planning tool to guide program improvement within facilities for youth who are delinquent (Appendix A).

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## TRANSITION INTERVIEW DATA COLLECTION METHODOLOGY

Information throughout this document is based on both current literature and the combined expertise of NDTAC staff. In addition, transition coordinators and project directors who were interviewed by NDTAC staff offered considerable information.

During the summer of 2007, NDTAC staff conducted telephone interviews with seven transition coordinators and project directors around the country. The purpose of these interviews was to synthesize practical insight and advice and identify strategies and tools that these experienced coordinators have used in their transition programs. NDTAC staff interviewed the following transition coordinators and project directors:

- **Dr. Mike Bullis**, Dean of the College of Education and Sommerville-Knight Professor of Education, Secondary Special Education and Transitions Department of Special Education and Clinical Sciences, College of Education, University of Oregon
- **Sgt. Belinda Cosgrove**, Garland County Juvenile Detention Center Mental Health Services, Arkansas Juvenile Re-Entry Action Program (J-RAP Program)
- **Chrissy Dorion**, Transition Coordinator, School District of Hillsborough County
- **Dr. Heather Griller-Clark**, Project Director, Arizona Detention Transition Project (ADTP) at Arizona State University
- **Marianne Moore**, Instructional Specialist, Middle/Secondary Transition, Virginia Department of Education
- **Jacque Reese, M.S.E.**, State Juvenile Education Initiative (JEDI) Coordinator for the Arkansas Department of Education, Special Education Unit
- **Dr. DeAnne Unruh**, Research Associate and Assistant Professor, Secondary Special Education & Transition, National Post-School Outcomes Center at the University of Oregon

The interviews focused on the following topics: general information about the transition programs of the interviewees; tools and research used to create their program; tools and research created as a result of their programs; tools and research used specifically to facilitate records transfer; types of outcome data collected and how the data are used; challenges and successes encountered during implementation; and advice the interviewees have for other transition coordinators.

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## II. OVERVIEW OF TRANSITION

Transition has been defined as “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.”<sup>1</sup> This definition identifies three elements of successful transition:

1. It is coordinated.
2. It is an outcome-oriented process.
3. It promotes successful movement between the facility and the community.<sup>a</sup>

The first element, coordination, requires individuals from multiple systems to work together to ensure that a youth involved in the juvenile justice system receives appropriate support services at all stages. The primary individuals involved are, of course, the youth/student and his or her family or adult advocate. An assigned point of contact, such as a transition counselor or specialist, school placement specialist, or staffing coordinator, is also extremely important in leading and coordinating the process. Others who should be involved in the process include court and probation personnel, administrators and staff from detention and corrections institutions, and personnel from a student’s community school (e.g., principal, guidance counselor, and teachers). Additional involvement may come from representatives of agency-based service providers in the areas of mental health, substance abuse, child welfare, and employment services. Ultimately, the individuals required to support a specific youth will depend on the unique needs of that child and his or her transition plan, and they will need to be identified case by case.

The second element, an outcome-oriented transition process, focuses on the goals of successful youth engagement with school and/or employment, avoidance of recidivism to the juvenile justice system, and reduction of the likelihood of future entry into the adult criminal justice system.

The third element, successful movement between the facility and the community, requires the youth to become positively engaged with his or her community by acquiring appropriate academic, vocational, behavioral, social, and independent living skills. Therefore, an effective transition process and high-quality support services within that process are essential for a youth to successfully live in the community following incarceration.

### COMPLEXITY OF THE TRANSITION PROCESS

There is no uniform route that all youth follow as they move into, through, and out of incarceration. A youth’s path depends on many decisions, choices, and rulings made by law enforcement agencies and the courts (e.g., whether or not to prosecute; whether or not to detain between court hearings). See Figure 1 for a simplified overview of the process.<sup>b</sup> Although having many options allows the justice system to respond to each unique situation, the

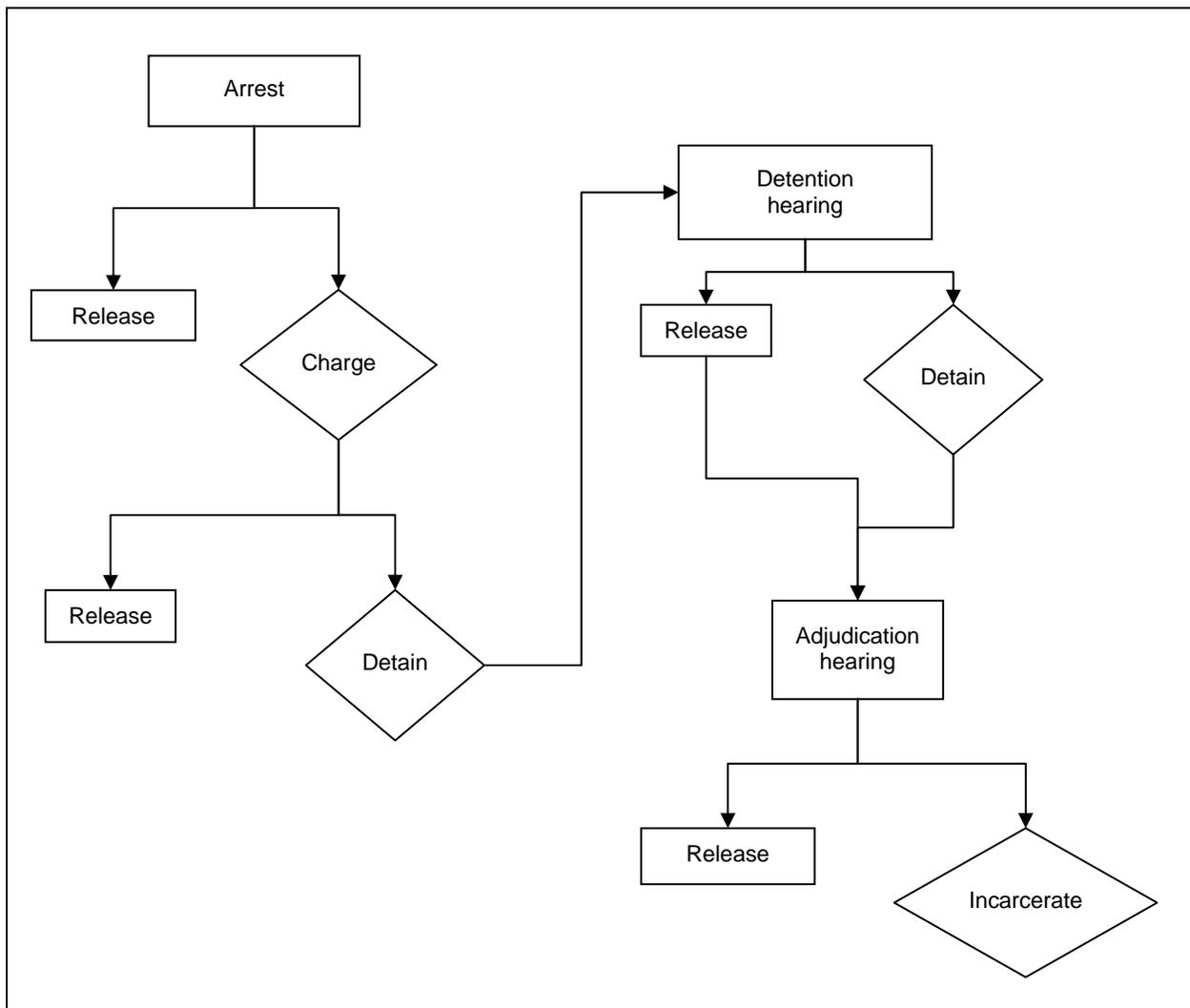
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<sup>a</sup> This concept of transition was originally articulated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 1990. It continues to appear in current statute under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004.

<sup>b</sup> For an education-focused flowchart of the transition process between an LEA and local detention center, see Nebraska Department of Education’s Pathfinder Education Transition Plan, here: [http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/nd/docs/NDE\\_fLowchart.pdf](http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/nd/docs/NDE_fLowchart.pdf)

complexity of the system can also create issues. Each pathway has different needs and challenges associated with it. For example, a youth who is released to his or her home and returns to the usual home school while awaiting adjudication requires different supports than a youth who is detained and educated in an institution. Also, each step along the way can entail a new transition for a youth and his or her family or adult advocate. For school placement issues alone, each decision made by the courts may require a student to adjust to a new educational environment, including new teachers, new rules, and a new curriculum. On a practical level, each move requires coordinating information and transferring academic records between and among different agencies, which if not done properly can impede a student's progress and rehabilitation.

**Figure 1. The Juvenile Justice System and the Path to Incarceration**



Helping a youth move through this complex system and make an eventual transition to the community requires a multidisciplinary, collaborative approach. The matrix in Figure 2 identifies

key players who may be involved in the transition process, and where in the process their involvement is most beneficial.<sup>c</sup>

**Figure 2. Key Players Involved in the Transition Process by Stage**

Key Players	Stage			
	System Entry	Residence	System Exit	Aftercare
Youth	✓	✓	✓	✓
Parent or guardian	✓	✓	✓	✓
Mentor	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Institution</b>				
Assessment specialist	✓	✓	✓	
Transition specialist or coordinator	✓	✓	✓	✓
Guidance counselor or academic advisor	✓	✓	✓	✓
Treatment and/or mental health counselor/clinician	✓	✓	✓	
Instructional personnel	✓	✓	✓	
Behavioral staff	✓	✓	✓	
Person(s) responsible for sending, receiving, and maintaining youths' records	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>School District</b>				
Registrar	✓		✓	✓
Records keeper	✓		✓	✓
Guidance counselor, school psychologist, school social worker, or academic advisor	✓		✓	✓
Principal or assistant principal			✓	✓
ESE specialist (when appropriate) <sup>d</sup>	✓	✓	✓	✓
Classroom teacher(s)	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Community</b>				
Juvenile probation officer			✓	✓
Conditional release or reentry counselor, when appropriate		✓	✓	✓
Alternative education and Vocational education services, when appropriate		✓	✓	✓
Family and/or youth counselors	✓	✓	✓	✓
Other community service providers (mental health, child welfare, and youth development agencies)	✓	✓	✓	✓

## CHARACTERISTICS OF INEFFECTIVE AND EFFECTIVE TRANSITION SYSTEMS

A variety of factors can impede successful transition back into the community. Common features of **ineffective transition systems** follow:<sup>2</sup>

- **Lack of coordination and accountability** between agencies and other relevant individuals due to
  - **Communication barriers**
  - **Policy variations and misalignments** from agency to agency
  - **Information-sharing restrictions** and lack of knowledge about student privacy rights and allowances
  - **Variations in individual and agency commitment** owing to caseload sizes, agency policies, and jurisdiction issues

<sup>c</sup> For Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice's DJJ Student Transition Model, which delineates the type of staff responsible each stage of transition, go to: [http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/nd/docs/transition\\_model.pdf](http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/nd/docs/transition_model.pdf)

<sup>d</sup> An Exceptional Student Education (ESE) specialist teaches students with disabilities and/or gifted students

- 
- **Transition plans created at the *end* of residence**, rather than at the beginning, which result in inadequate preparation of the youth for release
  - **Lack of youth, family, or agency involvement in planning, monitoring, and rehabilitation**
  - **Lack of youth, family, or agency involvement in the transition process**
  - **Lack of cultural and linguistic competency** by agencies in the provision of services
  - **Weak involvement from the court**, which places undue burden on juvenile justice facilities to provide transition supports
  - **Resistance to reintegration from the community, including community schools**
  - **Inadequate systems and policies for re-enrolling the youth in school** (e.g., no plan for the summer months), which can create undesirable circumstances for a youth who needs to remain engaged
  - **Inadequate professional development and specialized transition training** for agency staff, which lead to ineffective, and potentially harmful, practices
  - **Inadequate funding** for implementing an effective transition process, especially for stages other than exiting the system
  - **Poor tracking and monitoring systems** that do not link information across entities and limit the ability of responsible personnel to transfer records and to track a youth's progress upon release

In contrast, effective systems support collaborative relationships, communication, and cooperation among a youth, his or her family or adult advocate, schools, courts, and agencies that provide support to youth involved in the juvenile justice system. They have the following characteristics:

- **Coordinated service offerings** that reflect systemwide alignment and accountability across multiple agencies
- **A transition coordinator or specialist** to direct and organize the transition process<sup>e</sup>
- **Transition plans created at first contact** that include the input of all relevant individuals and lay the groundwork for a youth's progress and eventual community reintegration
- **High levels of youth involvement** in the approach to rehabilitation

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<sup>e</sup> For a Transition Coordinator job description from Louisiana, go to: [http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/nd/docs/transition\\_coordinator\\_job\\_description.pdf](http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/nd/docs/transition_coordinator_job_description.pdf). For Transition Personnel Competencies from Louisiana, go to: [http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/nd/docs/transition\\_personnel\\_comp.pdf](http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/nd/docs/transition_personnel_comp.pdf)

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- **High levels of family involvement** in their child’s treatment, education, and transition
  - **Culturally and linguistically** sensitive practices to promote youth and family involvement
  - **High levels of agency involvement** to address the needs of the “whole child”
  - **Strong court involvement** that holds all parties, not just justice agencies, accountable for serving a youth and his or her needs
  - **Agencies and schools that work together** to support community reintegration by changing and adapting practices to serve the youth
  - **Knowledgeable and well-trained staff** who can directly serve the needs of a youth or take steps to engage more-appropriate service providers
  - **Sufficient funding** to develop transition plans and processes that focus on community integration starting when a youth first comes into contact with the juvenile justice system
  - **Well-designed tracking and monitoring systems** that allow agencies to share up-to-date information about a youth’s past, recent accomplishments, needs, and goals

## **OVERVIEW OF INNOVATIVE PRACTICES IN TRANSITION**

This section presents an overview of innovative practices for transitioning a youth through his or her involvement with the juvenile justice system. Key elements of these strategies also appear in sections III through VI of this document, which address innovative practices for each stage of transition in detail. Here, five overarching strategies for successful transition are presented.

### **Strategy One: Communicate Openly and Strategically With Other Individuals Involved in the Transition Process**

Communication among everyone involved in the transition process plays a critical role in ensuring a successful transition for a youth moving through the juvenile justice system. A youth and his or her family have a diversity of needs and goals and may be involved in multiple education, health, and social service systems. Therefore, providers (educators, community service agency workers, juvenile justice officials, and others) must work together, and they must seek out and incorporate the input of the youth and his or her family (or adult advocate) to ensure that needs are being met.

Innovative practices in communication follow:

- **Ensure interagency/inter-system collaboration** among all entities involved in the transition process, including juvenile justice, workforce development, education, social services, health and mental health services, community-based organizations, and employment service providers.

- 
- **Use team-based transition planning**, led by a transition coordinator or specialist, which includes the youth and his or her family (or adult advocate) and a team that operates under a youth-guided and family-driven approach.
  - **Establish formal agreements** among agencies (e.g., contracts or “memoranda of agreement”), that assign roles and responsibilities, specify accountability, and delineate communication channels.
  - **Establish regular and consistent communication with the youth and family** to get their input into treatment and transition activities.
  - **Establish strong linkages with community, businesses, and professional organizations** that can help reintegrate the individual into the community.

## Strategy Two: Develop a Transition Plan and Monitor Progress

Tracking a youth as he or she progresses toward a successful transition from the juvenile justice system to the community should begin at the point of entry into the system, should be maintained throughout the entire period of involvement, and should guide long-term follow-up. An effective transition plan includes ongoing, systematic assessments of the youth’s strengths, needs, and progress (academic, vocational, social, emotional, behavioral, and therapeutic).

Innovative planning and monitoring practices include the following elements:

- **Create a transition plan** when the youth enters the system and update it throughout the process according to assessments of the youth’s current strengths, challenges, and needs. This plan identifies required support services and follows the youth to each subsequent placement.
- **Provide students with educational programming that focuses on academics, social skills, independent living skills, vocational skills, and the legal system** so they are prepared for the challenges they will encounter.
- **Maintain ongoing monitoring** of needs and student progress (e.g., academic, social, behavioral, vocation) based on systematic evaluation. The monitoring and tracking process both informs and is informed by the transition plan.
- **Provide long-term wraparound services** during aftercare, in which a transition specialist (ideally one representing multiple service providers) maintains contact with the youth and his or her family/adult advocate for at least six months after release to minimize the risk of recidivism.

*“A consistent transition planning process, curricula to support transition planning, databases to track and monitor student progress, and a planned sequence of services after release are the key ingredients of successful transition.”*

National Center on Education, Disability and Juvenile Justice<sup>3</sup>

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## Strategy Three: Provide a Range of Supports

A youth involved in the juvenile justice system needs a comprehensive approach to providing adequate supports for a successful transition back into the community. These supports include counseling and treatment, appropriate educational placements and supports, mentoring, and vocational training and support. The transition plan should identify these needs, provide a plan to address them, and continually monitor and update them throughout the transition process.

Innovative practices in providing supports include these elements:

- **Assign a mentor/adult advocate** to provide guidance, advice, and individualized, positive attention. This mentor serves as a role model as well as an advocate for support services and is ideally part of the transition team.<sup>f</sup>
- **Provide pre-release training** in social skills, independent living skills, and employment training to prepare for engagement in school and the community.
- **Conduct pre-release visits and “admission interviews”** at schools where future enrollment of the youth is planned or under consideration.<sup>5</sup>
- **Offer social and emotional learning and supports** to help the student learn to understand and manage his or her emotions and relationships.
- **Provide special education and/or English language development (ELD) programming**, if appropriate.
- **Develop youth-guided and family-driven wraparound approaches that provide strengths-based services** and supports at all stages of transition.
- **Provide transitional counseling**, supplied by the transition specialist, to establish appropriate goals and objectives.
- **Use youth development services** to build the youth’s capacities and enhance his or her engagement.

*“Juveniles who receive training in social skills, career exploration, and vocational education are more likely to succeed after release from juvenile correctional facilities.”*

National Center on Education, Disability and Juvenile Justice<sup>4</sup>

## Strategy Four: Conduct Regular and Comprehensive Evaluation of Transition Programs

To ensure that programs meet the transitional needs of students, facilities should establish an evaluation system to collect data on the transition services provided. In 2002, the U.S. Department of Education shifted its focus from a compliance-based system to one that focuses

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<sup>f</sup> See NDTAC’s guide, [The Mentoring Toolkit: Resources for Developing Programs for Incarcerated Youth](#), for more information.

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on outcomes as assessed through program evaluation.<sup>g</sup> Research<sup>6</sup> has identified three primary purposes for transition program evaluation:

- To inform program improvement efforts;
- To establish a reason to regularly communicate with probation officers and post-incarceration service providers and agencies, as they will be informants of the evaluation process; and
- To demonstrate ongoing commitment to improving student progress and outcomes.

Reliance on multiple sources of data (e.g., self-assessments, independent program evaluations, monitoring reports) provides a broader perspective, which can increase the usefulness of evaluation results. In addition, using multiple methods (e.g., questionnaires, surveys, checklists, interviews, documentation review, observation, and focus groups) makes for a more comprehensive approach.

A critical element in program evaluation is the collection of post-release outcome data. While such data can be difficult to obtain, they are crucial to gaining insight into program effectiveness and guiding future activities. One example of an ongoing evaluation initiative is Florida's Juvenile Justice Educational Enhancement Program (JJEED), which annually provides program reviews and technical assistance to nearly 200 Florida juvenile justice education programs. JJEED also publishes an annual report that assesses each of the participating programs across a variety of elements, including post-release outcome data.<sup>h</sup>

### **Strategy Five: Allocate Adequate Funds to Transition Services**

Even the best intentions can fall short if adequate resources are not provided to fund transition services. Programs should gauge what is needed in terms of staff and materials to establish a comprehensive transition service and to sustain it. When budgeting for transition services, it is imperative to not only consider those who solely focus on transition (e.g., transition specialists), but also the time commitments of others involved in the process, as identified throughout this document. The State Agency Program (Subpart 1) of Title I, Part D requires that each State agency that receives funding reserve 15–30% of its total allocation specifically for transition services. State agencies and facilities subject to this requirement can use this amount to help fund some of the ideas presented in this toolkit. These funds may also help agencies and facilities leverage funding from other sources.

## **RECORDS TRANSFER AND ITS IMPORTANCE TO TRANSITION**

Throughout the transition process, the efficient transfer of records is vital to a youth's academic success because it allows continuity of learning and supports. Effective records transfer gives

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<sup>g</sup> ED's shift of thinking, along with four types of program evaluation, is described at <http://www.ed.gov/news/pressreleases/2002/04/evaluation.html>.

<sup>h</sup> To access the reports, see <http://www.criminologycenter.fsu.edu/jjeed/research-pubs-presentations.php>.

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program staff essential information to evaluate and accommodate the needs of a student as he or she transitions through the juvenile justice system and different educational settings (e.g., detention center schools, education programs within temporary and final corrections placements).

This section presents an overview of practices related to records transfer and maintenance. Key elements of these strategies also appear in sections III through VI of this document, which address innovative practices for each stage of transition in greater detail. Here, four overarching strategies are presented.

### **Strategy One: Ensure Accurate, Complete, Useful, Timely, and Confidential Records and Records Transfer**

For records transfer to be effective, the following practices should be in place:

- **Ensure that records are accurate and complete.** Service providers need to have a complete and accurate set of records (including a youth’s academic and social and emotional background, strengths, and needs) to determine the appropriate academic placement and to identify what the youth needs to move forward.
- **Ensure that the data collected are useful** and provide information necessary to inform decisions.
- **Ensure that records are transferred in a timely manner.** Timely and effective transfer of records allows continuity of educational services and other needed supports. Timeliness is particularly important in an institutional setting given the highly transient nature of the placements.
- **Ensure that information is handled discreetly and confidentially** to protect the youth’s and family’s privacy.

### **Strategy Two: Identify Pertinent Federal, State, and Local Laws**

Agency staff should understand the Federal, State and local laws governing the transfer and sharing of youth records as well as general policy regarding youth confidentiality. It is essential that everyone involved in the records transfer process understand the statutory requirements to avoid placing unnecessary limitations on their ability to share a youth’s information. In some cases, lack of effective records transfer and information sharing is the result of *perceived* Federal and State legal constraints on the agencies involved.<sup>i</sup>

*“Collaboration is the process by which multiple stakeholders make a formal, long-term commitment to sharing resources to accomplish their vision.”*

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> For more information on laws that govern records transfer, please see NDTAC’s article “Legislation and Interagency Relationships Aid in the Successful Transfer of Student Records” at <http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/nd/resources/spotlight/spotlight200701a.asp>.

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## Strategy Three: Collaborate and Communicate with All Involved Individuals and Agencies

Agency staff and personnel from other districts, schools, agencies (e.g., mental health or substance abuse services), courts, family members and/or adult advocate or mentor, and community partners (e.g., employers, non-profit organizations, faith-based organizations, youth and parent advocacy organizations) should work collaboratively to coordinate transition planning and share information. By learning how different organizations work, personnel can communicate more effectively and identify procedures to promptly and effectively transfer records to ensure that the youth and his or her family receive the services they need during transition.

Agency stakeholders can encourage open and ongoing communication among organizations by holding regional and State meetings that bring together representatives of those organizations that should collaborate. Allowing vested parties to meet in person or by teleconference to provide their input on procedures may make them more willing to cooperate and coordinate the sharing of a youth's records when that youth leaves the care of one county or district and transitions to another. These meetings also promote discussions about possible barriers to transferring records, such as privacy restrictions, and strategies for overcoming these barriers. Below are a few ideas that facilities can use to begin collaborating with other agencies.

- **Establish what information to include and create a timeline.** Some key academic items to include are course credits earned and attempted, the youth's Individualized Education Plan (IEP), assessment data (State and district), copies of any certificates earned, and the youth's portfolio/work.
- **Delegate responsibilities.** Identify who will be responsible for
  - coordinating the collaborative activities between partnering facilities,
  - receiving the youth's records,
  - maintaining the youth's records, and
  - releasing the youth's records.
- **Enlist the help and support of family members.** The family can be a helpful source for obtaining academic data. Very often, the youth and his or her family know an IEP has been developed and can provide valuable information to guide placement in the absence of previous records. If they do not have this information, they can help identify the appropriate school contact. For this reason, agency staff should develop collaborative relationships with family members or legal guardians of a youth in an out-of-home placement. For strategies on getting parents involved, please see the *Family Involvement and Its Importance to Transition* section below, as well as the family involvement sections within each stage in this document.<sup>j</sup>
- **Establish follow-up procedures.** The transition team should establish the process for collecting follow-up data once a youth leaves the system. Early planning of how to

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<sup>j</sup> Also see NDTAC's Family Involvement Library at <http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/nd/family.htm> for a variety of related resources.

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collect follow-up data will help address later challenges. As in all other areas of the transition process, beginning with the end in mind—that is, the point when the youth reintegrates with his or her community and returns to the community school—will assist with a seamless transition when the youth leaves the system.

### **Strategy Four: Develop and Use an Electronic Data System**

Electronic data systems can be extremely helpful in both transferring and maintaining records for youth in the juvenile justice system. Systems developed across the State allow schools and facilities to access records with minimal delay. Using Title I, Part D funds can be used to establish a data system for maintaining these records. According to the Title I, Part D Guidance, funds can be used to purchase new equipment or fund other needs with the purpose of easing youth transitions. This includes hiring data clerks and/or training existing personnel to manage records in compliance with State and Federal laws.

Several States and cities, such as California, Colorado, Florida, Michigan, Missouri, Oregon, and New York City, have electronic youth databases. For instance, in California, the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE), which is responsible for administering all juvenile court schools and alternative education programs in the county, designed a comprehensive electronic data system (Studata C) to track youth coming through the system and ensure that each youth has up-to-date academic records. Studata C is Internet accessible and eases the sharing of youth data between LACOE’s court and community schools and alternative education programs.<sup>k</sup>

### **FAMILY<sup>1</sup> INVOLVEMENT AND ITS IMPORTANCE TO TRANSITION**

Family involvement can have a significant impact on outcomes for a child in the juvenile justice system. According to the National Center on Education, Disability, and Juvenile Justice, “Families have the potential to be the greatest source of positive change and support for youth in the juvenile justice system.”<sup>8</sup> Studies have concluded that maintaining or revitalizing family involvement while a youth is incarcerated or adjudicated is correlated with a successful transition back into the community and, ultimately, with reduced recidivism.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, youth who anticipate returning home or to live with other relatives upon release, as opposed to a less stable post-detention placement, have a significantly lower recidivism rate.<sup>10</sup>

This section presents an overview of practices related to family involvement. Key elements of these strategies also appear in sections III through VI of this document, which address innovative practices for each stage of transition in greater detail. Here, three overarching strategies are presented.

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<sup>k</sup> For more information on Studata C, please view the July 2005 NDTAC Webinar presented by the creator of Studata C, Frank Plaistowe, at [http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/nd/events/webinars.asp#data\\_systems](http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/nd/events/webinars.asp#data_systems).

<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this Toolkit, “family” and “parent” are interchangeable with guardian(s) or adult advocate(s) tending to the care of the youth.

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## **Strategy One: Help Parents Overcome Barriers, and Make the Environment Welcoming to Families**

Family members may fear that they are being judged by the school, court, and community because of their youth's criminal behavior. This fear may lead to hesitation about or resistance to involvement.<sup>11</sup> Along with other agency personnel, administrators and teachers from a child's new institutional school can reassure parents that their child's behavior is not a direct reflection on them. Schools can make this explicit, but parents may also benefit from a staff member expressing empathy about the parents' situation or directing the parents to a support group where they can get to know other parents in a similar situation. School staff should also explain to parents the differences in education practices between the community school and the juvenile justice facility. Below are some specific strategies to help parents overcome barriers and make the environment more welcoming to families.

- **Explain and/or provide literature** to family members and their youth about the incarceration process and system, their rights and their youth's rights, the goals of incarceration, and so on.
- **Reassure parents** that their child's behavior does not reflect on them as parents.
- **Help family members overcome any initial hesitation** about involvement.
- **Communicate to family members that school is a place for education**, whereas the institution/facility is where the child is held accountable.

After helping family members overcome any initial hesitation about involvement, it is important to make all subsequent encounters comfortable for the family. Below are some suggestions for how to do this:

- **Employ effective strategies to engage families.** These strategies include establishing trust and mutual respect by taking time to explain technical information, orienting family members to facility and school staff, and sharing decision making.
- **Provide an array of opportunities for family involvement.** Families may respond better to some opportunities than others. Even if a family does not respond to one opportunity (e.g., participating in a parent conference), continue to invite them to all pertinent opportunities.
- **Assess each family's level of involvement and act accordingly.** Inquire about the underlying causes of increased or decreased involvement. Build on strengths and brainstorm ways to overcome barriers.

## **Strategy Two: Communicate With Families in a Way That is Comfortable and Accessible**

Suggestions for communicating with parents follow:

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- **Be respectful and culturally competent** in interactions. This may include using a language that the family members understand and being sensitive to traditions and beliefs.
  - **Continue to reach out to the family**, even if initial attempts at engagement are unsuccessful. School staff should analyze and change communication strategies as necessary.
  - **Use multiple modes of communication.** The more modes of communication the school uses (e.g., in person, phone, email), the more likely it is that the recipient will receive the message. Once school staff know the mode or modes the family prefers, they can tailor their communications.
  - **Don't use technical jargon.** Using specialized terms, idioms, expressions, acronyms, and abbreviations that are understood by only a select group of people prevents others from fully engaging in communication.
  - **Realize that communication is a two-way street.** The school should strive not only to get its message across but also listen to the family's concerns and requests.

### **Strategy Three: If Family Members Are Unable or Unwilling to Be Involved, Engage Others**

Walker and Friedman argue that if family members are unable or unwilling to be involved, surrogate family members, extended family members, adult advocates or mentors should be assigned.<sup>12</sup> Some researchers have documented the effectiveness of such programs in reducing recidivism.<sup>13</sup> Even if individuals do not have a close relationship or a long history with the youth, they can still have a strong, positive impact.

#### **NEXT STEPS**

The following four sections of this document dig deeper into each stage of the transition process (i.e., system entry, residence, system exit, and aftercare) and discuss strategies that may be useful to each: general transition strategies, strategies specific to records transfer, and strategies specific to family involvement. Additionally, Appendix A is a self-study tool to help you determine your status in implementing key strategies and plan next steps in program improvement efforts.

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## III. STAGE 1: ENTRY INTO THE JUSTICE SYSTEM

### INTRODUCTION

The first stage of transition is a youth's initial contact with the juvenile justice system. In an effective system, planning for a successful exit from the juvenile justice system and back into the community begins at this point. Several components are involved at this stage: arrest, intake with screening assessments, records requests, and records receipt and entry into a database. These activities should lead to assigning a transition team and developing an initial transition plan. In certain situations, incarceration is not the best option for a youth who is delinquent; under these circumstances, diversion or community-based programs are more appropriate.

### WHAT WORKS AT THIS STAGE: INNOVATIVE PRACTICES

When a youth enters the juvenile justice system, the transition process begins. Practices that will support the youth and lead him or her to a successful exit from the system should be set into place at this time. Because this is the initial stage of the transition process, timely implementation of these strategies is crucial to ensure that the youth's transition process at subsequent stages goes well. The following overarching strategies will ensure a smooth entry into the juvenile justice system.

#### Strategy One: Conduct Intake Assessments

Once a youth is arrested and brought to a detention facility, he or she should be screened for mental, emotional, and behavioral conditions. The facility may also choose to interview the youth at this time to learn about his or her goals, interests, preferences, and self-identified needs. The youth should then be **assessed** for academic aptitude and special education needs.<sup>m</sup> A **transition plan** should be developed to implement the appropriate educational placements and **support services**, taking past school academic and behavioral records into account. A corresponding Individual Education Plan (IEP) may also need to be developed at this time.

#### Strategy Two: Assemble a Transition Team and Develop a Transition Plan

A **transition team** should be formed to create a comprehensive and thorough transition plan. This team should comprise the individuals best suited to create a plan that meets the youth's individual needs—individuals who can speak to and advocate for the various developmental and educational areas the youth needs to work on during and after incarceration. The team may include a transition specialist or coordinator, a mental health counselor or advocate, a juvenile justice administrator, educational representatives, and members of other community agencies for delinquent youth. This team should also include the youth and his or her family or an adult advocate or mentor who can act on the family's behalf.

The **transition plan** is the map to guide the youth toward eventual release and successful reintegration into the community. A good transition plan is comprehensive, containing all

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<sup>m</sup> For a list of common academic assessments used in N or D programs, see [http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/nd/data/assessment\\_CommonTests.asp](http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/nd/data/assessment_CommonTests.asp).

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records related to the youth’s progress—behavioral screening results, academic and vocational assessment results, education records (including past IEPs), credits earned at the mainstream school, transcripts from the initial interview, and other relevant information.

### **Strategy Three: Clearly Define Roles and Responsibilities of Individuals and Agencies to Aid in Open Communication**

Open **communication, cooperation, and mutual commitment** are necessary among the entities that will be part of the process. These ensure that the appropriate educational placements and **support services** are provided, eliminating fragmentation, misplacement, and misunderstanding. **Formal agreements** (such as contracts or memoranda of agreement that delineate the roles and responsibilities of each individual and agency in the process) may help ensure accountability and open communication among all parties.

Some States *require* formal agreements between transition agencies. For example, Virginia has an articulated agreement between the Department of Education and the Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS) on how they will work together. DRS also has agreements with each school district that contain action plans on how they will work together.<sup>14</sup> In Florida, school districts are required by legislation to “negotiate a cooperative agreement with the Department of Juvenile Justice,”<sup>15</sup> which includes developing transition plans for a youth entering and exiting a facility. In addition, legislation provides the basis for collaboratively developed career education plans, which are implemented in correctional facilities.

### **Strategy Four: Track and Monitor the Youth’s Progress**

Information from initial screenings, intake interviews, educational assessments, and school records should all be entered into a records system to **track and monitor** the youth’s progress during and after incarceration. This emphasis on prompt entry of the youth’s information into tracking and monitoring systems is especially critical in short-term detention facilities, where there is usually little time between entry and exit and where a youth may re-enter and exit the facility multiple times.

Juvenile justice administrators can face significant challenges in the effective and timely transfer of records. One innovative practice that is helpful in short-term detention centers is Arkansas’s **JEDI (Juvenile Education Initiative)**. JEDI is a web-based education program used in all juvenile detention centers across the State, several public school districts, and more than 60 schools. Aligned with the State’s benchmarks and standards, JEDI provides remedial tutoring in reading and mathematics. Because it is web-based, it follows a youth wherever he or she moves, which allows tracking throughout multiple educational placements, promotes collaboration between schools and detention centers, and facilitates data-driven instruction that is based on the youth’s needs.<sup>n</sup> This simplifies tracking and monitoring a student throughout the transition process.

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<sup>n</sup> For more information about the JEDI program, see <http://jedilearning.com>.

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## Strategy Five: Refer the Youth to Diversion or Community-Based Programs, When Appropriate

Some States have centralized their juvenile detention facilities (i.e., one or two facilities serve the entire State), which can cause a youth to leave his or her community while adjudicated. Although this arrangement may have fiscal benefits, it can prevent a family from regularly participating in their child's care and education. It can also make a youth's transition back to the community difficult because local resources and supports may not be visible to people outside the local community. As an alternative, some States (e.g., New Jersey) have established **programs that hold youth accountable for their behavior without removing them from their communities**. These programs are often geared to first-time, nonviolent offenders, and are based on research indicating that a period of confinement in a secure juvenile detention or corrections facility is a powerful predictor of negative life outcomes.<sup>16</sup> Programs like this reduce the need for transition back to the community because offenders are not removed from their existing location.

Another program that serves youth convicted of nonviolent offences at the local level is **Redeploy Illinois**.<sup>o</sup> This program uses financial incentives to encourage counties to provide services to nonviolent juvenile offenders at the local level rather than in the State correctional system. Each county must limit its State commitments to 75 percent of the average number of its juvenile commitments for the previous three years. The State then reimburses counties for the equivalent cost of housing those juveniles not served in the Department of Juvenile Justice. Counties can use these funds to provide community-based services to juveniles. Counties have to pay the costs of sending additional youth to the Department of Juvenile Justice after reaching the 75 percent threshold.

Similarly, Ohio has established a program that serves those who have committed felonies. **RECLAIM Ohio (Reasoned and Equitable Community and Local Alternatives to the Incarceration of Minors)** is a fiscal incentive program that gives juvenile courts the means to establish and maintain community-based programs. Funds previously allocated to State-operated correctional institutions are instead pooled and distributed directly to counties. RECLAIM Ohio allocations are based on a four-year average of felony adjudications, with deductions for those not served in the county during the previous year. According to the State, RECLAIM Ohio is responsible for more youth being served locally.<sup>p</sup>

### A. PRACTICES SPECIFIC TO RECORDS TRANSFER AT ENTRY

During the entry stage, a youth's records are released by the school or institution the youth is coming from and are received by the detention or corrections institution he or she is entering. Effective records transfer at this stage is crucial because it affects whether or not the youth will receive the proper referrals and services that are necessary for his or her success. The following

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<sup>o</sup> In December 2003, the Illinois General Assembly approved an amendment to House Bill 2545 establishing a pilot of Redeploy Illinois (Public Act 93-0641). For more information about Redeploy Illinois, see <http://www.ilga.gov/legislation/publicacts/fulltext.asp?Name=093-0641&GA=093>.

<sup>p</sup> For more information about RECLAIM Ohio, see <http://www.fccourts.org/drj/reclaim.html>.

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strategies can be used by transition program managers when considering records transfer procedures for youth entering the system.

### **Strategy One: Request Records That Will Allow Facility Staff to Make Appropriate Referrals and Provide Needed Services and Supports**

Gathering youths' records efficiently will allow continuity in educational instruction and other needed services and supports. *The sooner records are received, the quicker a youth can begin to receive needed services and supports.* For this to occur, the receiving institution should have an **effective and consistent process for requesting and receiving records**. These records will help educational staff provide the appropriate services and supports:

- Grades and credits earned
- Classes taken
- Scores on standardized assessments
- Information about any disabilities, and the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) if one exists
- Samples of student work

### **Strategy Two: Identify a Single Person to Manage All Records Upon Entry**

Ideally, receiving and managing a youth's records should be the **responsibility of one staff person** so that the institution sending the records knows whom to contact. Appointing a specific person to retrieve and maintain records from past placements eliminates confusion and reduces the chance that records will be lost within the facility itself. This person should have the contact information for the designated staff members at sending institutions (e.g., a student's home school) who are responsible for releasing records.

## **B. PRACTICES SPECIFIC TO FAMILY INVOLVEMENT AT ENTRY**

Having a child enter the juvenile justice system can be an overwhelming experience for the family. To engage parents at this point, it is important to be prepared to help them navigate this new and oftentimes daunting system. Below are strategies that promote family involvement at this stage.

### **Strategy One: Make Support Systems Available to the Family**

A facility or institution that has a **parent or family support group** should inform the family of its purpose and potential benefits of attendance and invite parents to attend the next meeting. Although parents may not respond to an initial invitation, the facility staff should not assume that they will never attend and should continue to invite them. If internal support groups are not available, **parents can be referred to external groups**. Forty-two States have been awarded Family Network grants by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to provide

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information, referrals, and support to families of youth with or at risk of experiencing serious emotional disturbances.<sup>9</sup>

Incarceration can be as hard for siblings as it is for parents; any available sibling support groups that should be identified to all families that enter the system.

### **Strategy Two: Provide the Family With an Orientation to the School Program and the Educational Opportunities Available**

Family members want and deserve to know what experiences their child will encounter. A **detailed orientation** to the school should cover school goals, expectations, and rules; assessment and progress reporting methods; and opportunities for parental involvement. **Logistical and demographic barriers** can sometimes prevent parents from attending an orientation. Using telephone conferences, or even computer-based video conferences, can provide parents with this important information even if they cannot be physically present.

### **Strategy Three: Request Family Help in Obtaining Educational Records**

Families can be a great **asset for identifying and acquiring appropriate records** in a timely manner. Asking for their assistance, and expressing the importance of continuity in an appropriate education, often produces positive results for the school and the family. The school may be able to get appropriate records faster and also establish a helpful parent-school partnership.

Records can include educational records such as grades, current placement information, IDEA IEP or Section 504 plans when appropriate, medical records detailing any pertinent medical diagnoses and current medications, and current psychiatric records.

## **NEXT STEPS**

Appendix A is a self-study tool that will help you gather data about your transition processes, determine your status in implementing key strategies, and plan next steps in program improvement efforts. Additionally, resources specific to this stage are shown below as examples of how States are implementing the presented strategies. For each document, the source, a Web site to access the document, and a brief description are provided. Resources specific to the entry stage are: Colorado's Reference Guide for Juvenile Screening and Assessment Instruments, mental health plans created by the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice, and youth transition plans created by the Transition Resource Action Center, and various records transfer documents.

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<sup>9</sup> For more information about the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' Family Network grants, see <http://www.samhsa.gov/newsroom/advisories/071011family5518.aspx>.

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## Resources for Entry

### Screening, Intake, and Assessment Tools

#### Reference Guide for Juvenile Screening and Assessment Instruments

**Source:** Interagency Advisory Committee on Adult and Juvenile Correctional Treatment (IACAJCT): Juvenile Screening and Assessment Subcommittee of Colorado

**URL:** [http://www.cdhs.State.co.us/dyc/PDFs/ClinicalServices\\_Juv\\_Screen\\_Assess\\_Guide.pdf](http://www.cdhs.State.co.us/dyc/PDFs/ClinicalServices_Juv_Screen_Assess_Guide.pdf)

**Description:** This document identifies and describes select screening and assessment instruments, as identified by the Colorado Interagency Advisory Committee on Adult and Juvenile Correctional Treatment (IACAJCT) Juvenile Screening and Assessment Subcommittee. For each instrument included, the following information is provided:

- Brief description of the instrument
- Agencies administering the tool
- Population
- Purpose
- When the tool is administered
- What decisions are made on the basis of the results
- Skill level required by staff to administer the tool
- Training requirement
- Cost
- Link or contact

### Transition Plans

#### Initial Interview and Transition Plan Worksheet

**Source:** State Training School of Iowa

**URL:** [http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/nd/docs/interview\\_questions.pdf](http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/nd/docs/interview_questions.pdf)

**Description:** This contains a set of information for the intake coordinator to ask the youth when first detained to learn about his/her family and friends, physical and emotional health, and religion and values. The second portion of the document, the Transition Plan Worksheet, is a screening instrument in the areas of placement information, skill plans, living options/budgeting assistance, necessary documents, transition plan review, psychological/counseling, and education.

#### Mental Health Transition Plan

**Source:** Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice

**URL:** [http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/studentsrvcs/MH\\_regulations.doc](http://www.doe.virginia.gov/VDOE/studentsrvcs/MH_regulations.doc)

**Description:** This is a comprehensive guide for the implementation of mental health transition plans in Virginia, and may be used as an example for other States. It includes legal requirements and policy guidance, as well as usable forms that may be modified. This guide also combines various pieces of the transition plan in one document.

#### Transition / Reintegration Plan

**Source:** Maricopa County Sheriff's Office, Arizona

**URL:** [http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/nd/docs/transition\\_plan\\_blank.doc](http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/nd/docs/transition_plan_blank.doc) (English version)

[http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/nd/docs/transition\\_plan\\_spanish\\_blank.doc](http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/nd/docs/transition_plan_spanish_blank.doc) (Spanish version)

**Description:** This comprehensive form includes demographic information, vision and hearing screening results, assessment results, diploma obtained, current case manager information, scheduled release date, physical/medical problems, behavior needs/strengths and goals/objectives, long-term and short-term life goals, support programs required upon release, documents required at release, transition team member names, and a transition plan activity log.

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## Resources for Entry

### **Transition Pathways: Student Portfolio and Pathways**

**Source:** Colorado Division of Youth Corrections

**URL:** [http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/nd/docs/transition\\_pathways.doc](http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/nd/docs/transition_pathways.doc)

**Description:** This form documents the various steps the youth needs to take in order to transition. It provides a timeline after intake and delineates the actions to be taken at each step. It provides a more complete picture of the youth as well as an organized process with which to help him/her transition.

### **Youth Transition Plan Worksheet**

**Source:** The Transition Resource Action Center (TRAC)

**URL:** <http://www.traconline.org/forms/YTW.doc>

**Description:** This transition plan worksheet focuses on the areas of Education, Employment, Finance, Housing, Health/Dental, Transportation, Life Skills, and Leisure. It includes youth goal-setting through asking a series of questions so that the youth can determine what his or her life priorities are upon release.

### **Scholastic Development Plan**

**Source:** North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

**URL:**

<http://www.juvjus.state.nc.us/resources/policies/ydd/education/YC%20047%20Scholastic%20Development%20Plan.pdf>

**Description:** With two different versions for grades K-8 and 9-12, this is an education-focused plan for youth in correctional education. Upon intake and records review, the appropriate person(s) designate grade level of studies and recommend academic interventions, if needed. High school curriculum choice as well as graduation requirements are also to be completed for youth in grades 9-12.

## **Records Transfer**

### **Education Passport**

**Source:** State of Tennessee Department of Children's Services

**URL:** [http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/nd/docs/education\\_passport.pdf](http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/nd/docs/education_passport.pdf)

**Description:** This is designed to compile needed school enrollment records in one location. Forms and documentation listed are to be kept with this Passport.

### **Sample Records Request Letter**

**Source:** North Carolina Department of Justice and Delinquency Prevention

**URL:** [http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/nd/docs/request\\_records\\_oct07.pdf](http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/nd/docs/request_records_oct07.pdf)

**Description:** This is a sample letter requesting records for a student. It lists all of the documents needed, to whom the records should be sent, and contact information for the requestor.

### **Parent/Guardian Release of Information and Consent Form**

**Source:** Idaho Department of Juvenile Corrections

**URL:** <http://www.djc.State.id.us/docs/Forms/183.pdf>

**Description:** This document requests the release of information and consent from a parent or guardian in the areas of medical care, education, personal belongings liability release, roadside safety instruction program, out-of-facility release, parent/guardian agreement to participate in counseling, and aftercare services.

### **Check-off Sheet for Committed Juveniles (Records Checklist)**

**Source:** Idaho Department of Juvenile Corrections

**URL:** <http://www.djc.State.id.us/docs/Forms/171.DOC>

**Description:** This checklist enables the facility to keep track of which records have been received for a resident.

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Resources for Entry
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<b>Interagency Agreements</b>
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<b>Sample Required Formal Agreement Title I, Part D</b>
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<b>Source:</b> North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
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<b>URL:</b> <a href="http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/nd/docs/sample_formal_agreement.pdf">http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/nd/docs/sample_formal_agreement.pdf</a>
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<b>Description:</b> This is a formal agreement between an LEA and a facility. It delineates each party's responsibilities.
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<b>Adult and Juvenile Detention, Juvenile Division Interagency Agreement between King County Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention and Seattle School District No. 1</b>
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<b>Source:</b> King County Department of Adult and Juvenile Detention, Washington
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<b>URL:</b> <a href="http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/nd/docs/detention_interagency_agreement.pdf">http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/nd/docs/detention_interagency_agreement.pdf</a>
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<b>Description:</b> This is an interagency agreement between a detention center and a school district. It delineates the legally-binding requirements, including each party's rights and obligations.
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If an agency, organization, or publisher wishes to suggest additional documents or resources for this Toolkit, it may submit a request to [ndtac@air.org](mailto:ndtac@air.org). NDTAC will review the information and consider it for inclusion in a future version of the Toolkit.

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## IV. STAGE 2: RESIDENCE

### INTRODUCTION

All activities during a youth's stay in a correctional facility should focus on preparing the youth for release. Residency is the phase in which the most time can be allotted to planning and working toward the youth's future in the community. This time should be used wisely and diligently.

### WHAT WORKS AT THIS STAGE: INNOVATIVE PRACTICES

Several strategies can be used during this stage move toward a successful exit from the system. When a youth is residing in a correctional facility, activities begun at intake should be continued and new activities that take advantage of this time should be started. Below are overarching strategies that focus on eventual transition out of an institution.

#### Strategy One: Continue Activities Initiated at Entry

Continue to conduct **academic and behavioral assessments** throughout the youth's stay, and conduct regular **needs assessments** for support services. These should be entered into a **data system** and analyzed for progress and/or changes in needs.

The **transition team** should meet regularly to review data and discuss the various options and **wraparound services** available, altering the **transition plan** as necessary. The youth's **mentor** (a member of the transition team) should meet with the youth regularly and frequently.

As discussed in the family involvement section, if families are not able to be involved, **surrogate parents** can have a positive impact on outcomes. California found that many of its institutions' residents lacked involved families and for that reason established its **Foster Grandparent Program**. In this program, senior citizens mentor youth. Although these programs have had success, some concerns have been raised about confidentiality.<sup>1</sup>

#### Strategy Two: Provide Pre-Release Training and Supports

**Pre-release training** and associated activities should begin during residency well in advance of scheduled release dates. In addition to the regular academic program, pre-release training should include instruction in social skills, independent living skills, and pre-employment training—all corresponding to and supporting the youth's transition plan.<sup>17</sup> For example, the Virginia-based **REACH program** teaches detained youth how to make positive and appropriate choices during incarceration. REACH integrates good citizenship, teamwork, a sense of community, compassion, organizational skills, physical fitness, self-improvement, character development, and self-empowerment. Youth are given opportunities to demonstrate acquired skills and be rewarded for their efforts.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information about California's Foster Grandparent program, see [http://childlaw.sc.edu/frmPublications/v1n2\\_115200443220.pdf](http://childlaw.sc.edu/frmPublications/v1n2_115200443220.pdf).

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**Pen or Pencil** is a social studies curriculum that teaches responsibility and good decision making through a series of history lessons based on the Underground Railroad and civil rights movements. Use of media and technology, combined with a service-learning component, help develop complex cognitive skills, knowledge acquisition, intrapersonal skills, academic achievement, and other important areas in the formation of highly at-risk youths' development.<sup>s</sup>

**Hawaii's Girl Court** was established in 2004 to promote improved outcomes for girl offenders. Based on the recommendation of the court, gender-specific programming is offered to girls and their families on a case-by-case basis. Programming can include parent education and support groups, where girls meet to discuss issues such as preventing teen pregnancy, preventing domestic violence (and using intervention), healing from trauma, avoiding substance abuse, and setting positive and healthy goals. The girls also receive intensive supervision and participate in workshops and activities.<sup>t</sup>

Educators in juvenile justice know how difficult it can be to teach this specific population, due to the challenges these youth face in addition to learning. Their teachers need training that is different from that provided to teachers in public schools. The **Educator's Curriculum** is a 40-hour staff development curriculum developed by and for teachers of students in confinement. It contains nine modules: current trends and issues in juvenile justice education, institutional culture, student assessment, curriculum, teaching and learning, behavior management, social skills, and transition.<sup>u</sup>

### **Strategy Three: Ensure Appropriate Educational Placements**

Correctional educators, one of whom should be part of the transition team, need to select **curriculum** appropriate for the youth on the basis of past school placements and records as well as intake assessments. Because of the prevalence of disabilities among youth who are incarcerated, an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) may be a component of the transition plan, requiring a **special education** curriculum. Ideally, the curriculum used in a correctional facility should parallel that used in the mainstream school so that the youth can earn credits while incarcerated and stay on track with the school he or she will eventually re-enter.<sup>18</sup> **Formal agreements** between the facility and the school district are a good way to facilitate the use of **dual curricula**. The New York City school district created a dual enrollment policy in 2004, which requires the home school to maintain a youth's information on file during the youth's incarceration. Youth are to re-enroll in the school immediately on release, or the school must initiate an investigation.<sup>19</sup>

## **A. PRACTICES SPECIFIC TO RECORDS MAINTENANCE**

Youth in institutional settings often leave facilities with records that do not reflect their academic accomplishments. Maintaining accurate academic records in this stage is essential to maintaining continuity of educational services. The following strategies can be used by transition program managers when considering records transfer procedures during residency.

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<sup>s</sup> For more information about Pen or Pencil, see [www.nafj.org](http://www.nafj.org).

<sup>t</sup> For more information about Hawaii's Girl Court, see <http://www.girlscourt.org>.

<sup>u</sup> For more information about the Educator's Curriculum, see [www.npjs.org](http://www.npjs.org).

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## **Strategy One: Make Sure That Records Maintenance Procedures Are Written and Clearly Communicated to Staff**

The process for maintaining a youth's records should be **in writing, and clearly communicated** to the staff member who is responsible for keeping records; to other individuals involved, such as the correctional teacher, the transition coordinator, and the probation officer; and to the youth's family. If possible, providing a manual or a quick reference guide of the process will assist staff as they update records.

## **Strategy Two: Designate One Staff Member to be Responsible for Maintaining Records**

Maintaining a youth's records should be the **responsibility of one staff person**, who may not always be the person who was responsible for initially requesting and receiving the records at entry. The individual should either be trained in academic records maintenance, or enlist the support of someone with the proper training. For example, the individual should be familiar with testing policies and in some cases be able to interpret test results and other academic information to properly annotate a student's record. Having only a few people maintain records will help eliminate data entry errors and inconsistency.

## **Strategy Three: Regularly Update the Youth's Records, Including Conducting Regular Assessments to Document Progress**

While the youth is in a facility, it is important that his or her records be **updated on a regular basis**. This way, when the youth leaves, the records will accurately reflect his or her progress, regardless of the amount of lead time given before the youth changes placement. More important, it allows needed services and supports to be continued after the youth leaves. 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 content areas in which instruction is provided. The appropriate instruction for the youth will depend on his or her unique needs as well as on State and local curriculum standards. Facilities' schools also need to select appropriate assessment instruments, using tests that are valid, age appropriate, grade appropriate, and free of cultural biases.<sup>v</sup>

To ensure that records are reliably maintained, the process for updating records should be **consistent** regardless of who enters data. Automated data collection systems can be powerful tools for maintaining accurate records. At the facility level, an electronic database can store large amounts of youth data and allows an individual's test scores, credits, and grades to be easily updated. In some States or counties, the entire juvenile justice system has an automated data collection system, which allows facilities to enter information into a common database that is available to other facilities and schools within the system.

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<sup>v</sup> For additional information, see NDTAC's *A Brief Guide for Selecting and Using Pre-Post Assessments* at <http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/nd/resources/spotlight/spotlight200604a.asp>.

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## **Strategy Four: Send Progress Updates to the Family, the Home School, and Other Members of the Transition Team**

As discussed previously, a key aspect of ensuring a youth's successful transition is thinking about community reintegration from the beginning. To address the stigma of being in this system, **regularly communicate the progress the youth is making while committed.** Improved test scores, course completions, and credit accrual are all significant and may improve the reception the student receives when returning to the community school. Other types of progress, such as new academic interests or positive responses to specific teaching practices, are also worth communicating.

### **B. PRACTICES SPECIFIC TO FAMILY INVOLVEMENT DURING RESIDENCY**

Family involvement is a key ingredient to the youth's success while at a facility and after leaving. The family should continue to be given opportunities for involvement. Potential strategies to promote family involvement at this stage are identified below.

#### **Strategy One: Offer Programs to Family Members to Develop and Hone Their Parenting Skills**

The goal is most often for a youth to return home to his or her family. In preparation, parents can often benefit from **parenting classes.** Classes can cover general parenting skills, such as development stages, positive reinforcement and behavior modification techniques, and effective communication skills. Classes can also **address causes of behavior** associated with incarceration or adjudication and cover strategies to reduce recidivism.

For example, the **Strengthening Families Program (SFP)** is a behavioral and cognitive skills training program for high-risk families that research has shown to have positive results (especially for African American families). It requires the participation of the parents/guardians and children, and is designed to increase resilience and decrease delinquency, depression, school failure, and violence.<sup>w</sup>

#### **Strategy Two: Enhance Family Involvement Through Family Counseling**

**Family counseling** can benefit both the youth and his or her family. Family counseling that "is carefully structured, teaches skills, and focuses on family problems or youth needs is shown to reduce recidivism ....A **combination of cognitive problem solving training and parent training** has been found to be the most effective approach for reducing antisocial behavior in youth and in reducing stress and depression in parents."<sup>20</sup>

#### **Strategy Three: Continue to Make the School Inviting to the Family**

Although strategies for making the school inviting have already been presented, additional opportunities occur at this stage. One strategy is to **open the school to families during the**

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<sup>w</sup> For more information about the Strengthening Families Program, visit [www.strengtheningfamiliesprogram.org](http://www.strengtheningfamiliesprogram.org).

**facility’s regular visiting hours**, with teachers on hand, for family tours and informal parent-teacher conferences. Opening the school during visiting hours several times a year gives parents another opportunity to engage in their child’s education.

## NEXT STEPS

In the Appendices is a self-study tool specific to this stage of transition. The tool will help you gather applicable institutional data on your transition processes, determine your status in implementing key strategies, and plan next steps in program improvement efforts. Additionally, resources specific to this stage have been compiled, below, as examples of how States are implementing the presented strategies. For each document, the source, a Web site to access the document, and a brief description are provided. Action documents that are pertinent to this stage include: the Youth Climate Survey developed by the Performance-Based Standards (PbS) Learning Institute, Inc., a juvenile questionnaire created by the North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, and the Merging Two Worlds (M2W) curriculum.

<b>Resources for Residence</b>
<p><b>Youth Surveys</b></p> <p><b>Conditions for Learning Survey</b>  <b>Source:</b> American Institutes for Research (AIR)  <b>URL:</b> <a href="http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/nd/docs/cflsurvey_hs.pdf">http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/nd/docs/cflsurvey_hs.pdf</a> (high school version)  <a href="http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/nd/docs/cflsurvey_ms.pdf">http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/nd/docs/cflsurvey_ms.pdf</a> (middle school version)  <b>Description:</b> This schoolwide assessment instrument collects information on how students experience the school climate. It can be administered on a schoolwide basis or to a sample of students, and their data can be disaggregated to see how subgroups of students are experiencing the school environment. This instrument, initially developed for use in Chicago Public Schools, is now being applied in a number of U.S. districts.</p>
<p><b>Youth Climate Survey</b>  <b>Source:</b> Performance-based Standards (PbS) Learning Institute, Inc.  <b>URL:</b> <a href="http://pbstandards.org/DocLib/Youth_Climate_Survey_October2008.pdf">http://pbstandards.org/DocLib/Youth_Climate_Survey_October2008.pdf</a>  <b>Description:</b> This survey is used to obtain youths’ opinions about basic safety and security issues and about the extent to which programs are implemented and policies are followed.</p>
<p><b>Juvenile Questionnaire</b>  <b>Source:</b> North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention  <b>URL:</b> <a href="http://www.ncdjdp.org/resources/policies/ydd/ycd/forms/029- Juvenile_ Questionnaire.pdf">http://www.ncdjdp.org/resources/policies/ydd/ycd/forms/029- Juvenile_ Questionnaire.pdf</a>  <b>Description:</b> This brief questionnaire is a form for youth in correctional facilities to complete regarding their feelings toward various aspects of their experience in detention. Satisfaction with treatment plan, level of understanding of treatment plan and goals, level of satisfaction with the education they are receiving, and whether or not they feel respected by facility staff are asked, among other areas. The data obtained through this questionnaire will enable facility staff to better understand youths’ perspectives and feelings on various components of their detention.</p>
<p><b>Curriculum</b></p> <p><b>Transition Curriculum</b>  <b>Source:</b> North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention  <b>URL:</b> <a href="http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/nd/docs/transition_curriculum.pdf">http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/nd/docs/transition_curriculum.pdf</a>  <b>Description:</b> This document defines and lists the services a youth needs in order to transition successfully. These services include: education, community/institutional experiences, employment, adult living skills, daily living skills,</p>

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## Resources for Residence

and functional vocational training. This curriculum includes the targeted objectives to which the youth may aim within each of these service areas.

### **Merging Two Worlds (M2W) Curriculum**

**Source:** Arizona Department of Education

**URL:** <http://www.ade.az.gov/ess/SpecialProjects/securecare/>.

**Description:** Merging Two Worlds (M2W) is a curriculum designed for youth in correctional facilities. Through four chapters containing 40 lessons, M2W teaches life skills in preparation for youths' exit from the system. The chapters teach areas such as self-awareness, career aptitude, personal skills, goal-setting, health and wellness, responsibility, and money management. A mini version of the curriculum consists of 12 lessons. Both versions are available for free on the ADE Web site, although teacher training is recommended prior to using the materials.

### **School-Parent Compact**

#### **School-Parent Compact**

**Source:** North Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

**URL:** [http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/nd/docs/school\\_parent\\_compact.pdf](http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/nd/docs/school_parent_compact.pdf)

**Description:** The purpose of this compact is to foster the development of a school-parent relationship to help students achieve State academic standards. This compact delineates the responsibilities of the parent, staff person, student, and principal; each person signs and dates the document.

If an agency, organization, or publisher wishes to suggest additional documents or resources for this Toolkit, it may submit a request to [ndtac@air.org](mailto:ndtac@air.org). NDTAC will review the information and consider it for inclusion in a future version of the Toolkit.

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## V. STAGE 3: EXIT FROM INCARCERATION

### INTRODUCTION

Research shows that juveniles experience high recidivism rates, ranging from 55 to 75 percent.<sup>21</sup> In addition, most youth do not reengage with the educational system after leaving confinement. For instance, the New York City Department of Education documented that two-thirds of high school-age offenders do not return to school after release.<sup>22</sup> Research in Kentucky showed a 95 percent dropout rate between release and entrance into a public school system or transitional educational center.<sup>23</sup> The key to preventing this, as suggested by some research, is engagement.<sup>24</sup> Therefore, effective transition programming needs to focus on a youth's re-entrance into the community-based education system and appropriate workforce opportunities.

Making the transition from juvenile detention and correctional facilities, which are designed to provide a structured environment with continuous supervision and a wide range of services, to the less-structured environment of mainstream education settings or employment may be difficult. A young offender transitioning back to society is often still affected by the social and personal influences that contributed to the conduct resulting in incarceration in the first place. He or she may need an array of support services upon re-entry, ranging from counseling and other mental health services to medical services, as well as additional tutoring or other academic supports to successfully reintegrate. Some of these services may be outside the scope of services provided by the mainstream education system, and certainly outside the scope of an employer's responsibilities, adding another layer of complexity to successfully meeting the youth's transition needs. Planning for services requires collaboration at multiple levels.<sup>25</sup>

### WHAT WORKS AT THIS STAGE: INNOVATIVE PRACTICES

The exit phase is intense and requires a number of activities and services at both the current facility and the future placement and school. In addition to activities already being conducted, such as continuing systematic assessments and updating the transition plan accordingly (see entry and residence stages), three other strategies should be placed into action.

#### **Strategy One: Begin Pre-Release Information Sharing**

**Pre-release information sharing** comprises discussions among the facility and the receiving school, the transition team, and the youth, during which the youth's service needs, academic achievement, placement considerations, and future goals are discussed.<sup>26</sup> This discussion should be based on the transition plan and include such information as what has and has not been effective in caring for the youth and what types of support options are available at the receiving entity. All entities should discuss how they will assist one another in working with the youth given their role (e.g., schools, probation agencies, and facilities working together to monitor attendance and behavior standards). Concrete, specific, and measurable goals for the youth should be established or revised now, ensuring that a solid exit plan is in place before the youth leaves the facility.

To facilitate this process, many States have established **reentry initiatives**. Some are Statewide, whereas others target specific populations. For instance, the Arizona Reentry Initiative, funded

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by a grant from the U.S. Office of Justice Program’s Serious and Violent Offender Reentry Initiative, provides transition services for paroled juveniles in rural counties. The grant funds Reentry Specialists, who help juveniles, families, and parole services improve juvenile transition to the community in the areas of education, employment, treatment for substance abuse, mental health care, housing, mentoring, and community involvement.<sup>x</sup>

In Maine, State law provides for a “reintegration team” to be established within 10 days of learning about the re-enrollment of a student from a correctional facility.<sup>27</sup> This team consists of the school’s administrator and the student’s classroom teacher, parent, or guidance counselor, and is responsible for reintegration planning for the student.

## **Strategy Two: Conduct a Pre-Release Visit to the School**

A **pre-release visit** to the receiving school and an **admission interview** should be conducted at this stage. The youth, the juvenile justice official, and family members (or an adult advocate/mentor) should visit the school and meet the principal and potential teachers. This can break the ice between the receiving school staff and the youth. It can also help in forming first impressions (or revising old impressions if the youth is re-entering the same school from before incarceration) and ameliorating potential fears that both the school staff and the youth may have. Classroom placement and curricular options can also be discussed at this time.

The admission interview, often conducted by the principal, lets the school get reacquainted with the youth and parents, as well as understand the impact of rehabilitation. The principal may choose to ask about the following measures: likes and dislikes, self-perception, relationships with parents and authority figures, academic and vocational goals, mental health concerns, and strengths and weaknesses. The interview is an ideal time for school staff to discuss school rules and any “zero tolerance” policies. The youth and his or her parents should be required to sign a Statement acknowledging that they are aware of and understand the school rules. If a youth/parent handbook outlining school rules and policies is available, it should be given to the youth and his or her parents at this time. In addition to discussing rules and policies, this is a key opportunity for school staff members to encourage school attachment and engagement, for both the youth and the parents.<sup>28</sup>

## **Strategy Three: Start Transitional Counseling and Continue Mentoring**

**Transitional counseling** should occur in conjunction with pre-release information sharing. A counselor at the facility should check in as the youth leaves the facility and enters school to ensure that he or she is on track with his or her goals and feels supported. A youth who has been incarcerated may feel abandoned when leaving a structured environment that offered a great deal of individual attention for the less-structured environment of a public school. This is another reason a **mentor or an adult advocate** is extremely useful.

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<sup>x</sup> For more information about this program, see <http://www.azdjv.gov/Community/Overview.htm>.

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## A. PRACTICES SPECIFIC TO RECORDS TRANSFER AT EXIT

As a youth exits the system, he or she either returns to the community or transfers to another juvenile detention, juvenile corrections, or adult corrections facility. It is vital that the information packet be complete when a youth leaves the system so that the youth's aftercare transition goals can be implemented and he or she can receive the proper referrals and services necessary for success after leaving the system. The educational exit packet should include a copy of the exit transition plan, grades and credits earned, classes taken, scores on standardized assessments, IEP if applicable, examples of the student's work, and all other information about the academic progress the youth has made while committed.

Transition program managers can use the following strategy when considering records transfer procedures for a youth exiting the system.

### **Strategy One: Release a Youth's Records in a Timely and Secure Manner**

As the youth exits the system, it is important for his or her **records to be released in a timely manner** to the next educational placement. A delay in this process can lead to a lapse in engagement during the transition process, which significantly reduces the likelihood of success.<sup>29</sup> To remedy this, several States (including Florida, Kentucky,<sup>y</sup> and California<sup>z</sup>) have introduced laws requiring records to be transferred within a certain number of days. In Florida, for instance, educational records must be provided by the school district within 5 days of the institution's request.<sup>aa</sup> Another way to facilitate effective records transfer is to have them sent to a **designated staff member** at the community school to which the youth is returning. Likewise, if the youth is transferring to another detention or correctional facility, the records should be transferred to a designated staff member at the new placement. Assigning one person to receive and/or release records helps eliminate confusion.

### **Strategy Two: Use a Consistent Method for Transferring Educational Records**

In order to ensure that youth receive appropriate educational services and earn credit for the work they complete while in the system, facility staff must use a consistent method for transferring educational records to the youth's next educational placement. In Massachusetts, for example, educational programs are required to use a Universal Student Transcript (UST) designed to promote credit recovery and to reduce delays in transferring student records, thus decreasing delays in reintegration into the community school. The UST consists of a standardized set of forms, with sections that detail: 1) course titles, 2) grades earned, 3) effort made, 4) contact hours, 5) course teachers, 6) topics covered/ skills addressed, 7) text/materials used, and 8) comments. Educators are required to generate a UTS for any youth that is detained or committed by the Department of Youth Services (DYS) and spends more than 15 consecutive school days in a residential DYS facility. In addition, educational programs are required to

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<sup>y</sup> See <http://www.lrc.State.ky.us/KRS/158-00/137.PDF> for information on Kentucky's Rule 158.137.

<sup>z</sup> See [http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/03-04/bill/asm/ab\\_0451-0500/ab\\_490\\_bill\\_20031012\\_chaptered.pdf](http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/pub/03-04/bill/asm/ab_0451-0500/ab_490_bill_20031012_chaptered.pdf) for information on California's AB 490.

<sup>aa</sup> See [https://www.flrules.org/Gateway/View\\_notice.asp?id=5616414](https://www.flrules.org/Gateway/View_notice.asp?id=5616414) for more information.

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complete and send out the UST within 48 hours of a youth's exit from the system or transfer to another detention or corrections facility. To ensure that the UST was used consistently and appropriately across educational programs when it was introduced, mandatory trainings were held for educators.<sup>30</sup>

## **B. PRACTICES SPECIFIC TO FAMILY INVOLVEMENT AT EXIT**

As a youth prepares to leave a juvenile justice facility, family involvement is critical. Consequences, positive or negative, of decisions made at this stage will have a direct impact on both the youth and the family. Below are strategies that can promote a youth's success through family involvement.

### **Strategy One: Engage the Family in All Decision-Making Processes**

When exiting from the system, the youth will optimally be reunited with his or her family. To this end, it is imperative that **family members be engaged in all decision-making processes**, such as

- identifying specific goals and corresponding support services for the youth and his or her family,
- recommending educational placement, and
- establishing timelines for exiting.

### **Strategy Two: Prepare the Family for Changes in Their Child**

As the exit time approaches, facility administrators should increase their attempts to engage family members. Holding conversations with parents and their child will help them learn more about how their son or daughter has changed as a result of residing in an institution (e.g., hygiene and personal care, food preparation and eating, studying and homework, taking responsibility for chores). Giving the family ideas about how to support their child will help ensure that positive habits continue beyond incarceration.

### **Strategy Three: Make the Transition Process as Gradual as Possible**

Another key strategy is to **make this stage gradual through home visits**. It is ideal if the youth can return home for short visits of a few hours ramping up to longer visits of a few days before actually returning home. This process can help the family transition and identify potential problems while support services are still in place.

## **NEXT STEPS**

In the Appendices is a self-study tool specific to this stage of transition. The tool will help you gather applicable institutional data on your transition processes, determine your status in implementing key strategies, and plan next steps in program improvement efforts. Additionally, action documents specific to this stage have been compiled below, to serve as examples of how States are implementing the presented strategies. For each document presented, the source, a Web site to access the document, and a brief description are provided. Resources for use at exit

include: a Youth Exit Interview developed by the Performance-based Standards (PbS) Learning Institute, Inc., a mentoring needs assessment, and a youth’s release action plan.

<b>Resources for Exit</b>
<b>Youth Interviews</b>
<p><b>Youth Exit Interview</b>  <b>Source:</b> Performance-based Standards (PbS) Learning Institute, Inc.  <b>URL:</b> <a href="http://pbstandards.org/DocLib/Youth_Exit_Interview_October2008.pdf">http://pbstandards.org/DocLib/Youth_Exit_Interview_October2008.pdf</a> for English, and <a href="http://pbstandards.org/DocLib/Youth_Exit_Interview_Spanish_October2008.pdf">http://pbstandards.org/DocLib/Youth_Exit_Interview_Spanish_October2008.pdf</a> for Spanish  <b>Description:</b> The purpose of this interview is to obtain the youth’s opinion about his or her readiness to leave a facility and move on to the next placement.</p>
<p><b>Mentoring Needs Assessment</b>  <b>Source:</b> Aftercare for Indiana through Mentoring Program (AIM)  <b>URL:</b> <a href="http://aim.spea.iupui.edu/members/NEEDS_ASSESSMENT_INTERVIEW_2004.doc">http://aim.spea.iupui.edu/members/NEEDS_ASSESSMENT_INTERVIEW_2004.doc</a>  <b>Description:</b> The purpose of this interview is to assess a youth’s needs. It is used to guide AIM programming while the participant is incarcerated and is the basis of the development of a re-entry plan prior to release.</p>
<p><b>Youth’s Release Action Plan</b>  <b>Source:</b> Wisconsin Department of Corrections  <b>URL:</b> <a href="http://wi-doc.com/DJC_newsletter/newsletter_feb06/2312%20Youth's%20Release%20Action%20Plan%2010-05.doc">http://wi-doc.com/DJC_newsletter/newsletter_feb06/2312%20Youth's%20Release%20Action%20Plan%2010-05.doc</a>  <b>Description:</b> This form documents youths’ identification of people and supports needed upon release to promote successful outcomes after incarceration.</p>

If an agency, organization, or publisher wishes to suggest additional documents or resources for this Toolkit, it may submit a request to [ndtac@air.org](mailto:ndtac@air.org). NDTAC will review the information and consider it for inclusion in a future version of the Toolkit.

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## VI. STAGE 4: AFTERCARE

### INTRODUCTION

Transition does not end with a youth's release, as aftercare is the time when the youth re-enters the context from which he or she first came into detention. The need for effective aftercare services has been well documented.<sup>31</sup> For instance, a longitudinal study by Bullis and colleagues followed 531 youth for 12 months after release from a facility.<sup>32</sup> They found that youth who were engaged with work and school 6 and 12 months after release were less likely to return to the juvenile correctional system. Such results highlight the importance of aftercare services, especially engaging youth in school and/ or work upon release. As such, a plethora of supports needs to be in place as the youth adjusts to community and school life. The aftercare period of transition is *critical*.

### WHAT WORKS AT THIS STAGE: INNOVATIVE PRACTICES

After a youth exits from incarceration and enters aftercare, many supports should be in place to facilitate his or her re-entry into the community. The transition specialist, coordinator, or whoever is in charge of the youth's transition plan must take all steps necessary to ensure that the youth is supported and monitored beyond the confines of an institution. Several innovative strategies can be put into place to better guarantee that the youth will not fall through the cracks after exit.

#### **Strategy One: Provide Transitional Counseling**

Within the first two weeks of release and enrollment into the youth's new school or employment setting, a **transitional counselor** from the juvenile justice facility should either call the youth or pay him or her a visit. This communication can help address any issues the youth is having in the new environment and help him or her stay connected with an adult until rapport is developed with adults in the new environment. Transitional counseling also ensures that the youth is on track with his or her goals and is following the plan established during exit from the facility.

#### **Strategy Two: Ensure Follow-Up and Monitoring**

Research shows that facility staff should maintain contact and **follow-up** with the youth for up to six months after release.<sup>33</sup> Two States have unique processes for **monitoring** youth after release. Pennsylvania assigns two parole officers to each youth—one for court activities and one based at the school the youth enters. The school-based probation officer oversees not only the youth's behavior but also the transition process. In Tennessee, community volunteers serve as parole officers in the field so that salaried officers can stay in the courts. Volunteers perform all the work in the field that the officers would normally do, increasing the parole officer-to-youth ratio across the State.

#### **Strategy Three: Supply Wraparound Support Services**

Aftercare is the time when “the rubber hits the road” and decisions are made about whether to continue support services that the youth has received during transition. The youth's **transition**

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**specialist and team** should ensure that he or she receives **wraparound support services** that are individualized according to the youth’s strengths, challenges, and needs. These support services should view the youth in the context of his or her new environment, and be both comprehensive and coordinated among all the entities involved. Sound transition team management, including **role articulation and responsibility**, can facilitate the **delivery of these services in a planned and organized sequence**.

The National Wraparound Initiative has identified 10 principles of an effective wraparound program,<sup>34</sup> as described below.

1. Family voice and choice. Families and youth should be key team members whose input is solicited and prioritized throughout each phase of the transition process. Families should be able to make key decisions with the support and encouragement of the team.
2. Team based. A team of individuals, who are all committed to supporting the family through this process, should be identified.
3. Natural supports. When determining supports and services, the team should draw from family members’ networks of interpersonal and community relationships as much as possible. Such support is more often accessible to and sustainable for families.
4. Collaboration. Team members should share the responsibility of developing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the wraparound plan.
5. Community based. Support services and strategies should be inclusive, responsive, accessible, and implemented in the least restrictive setting possible, in efforts to support the child’s integration back into their family and community.
6. Culturally competent. Wraparound services should be aligned with the values, preferences, beliefs, culture, and identity of the youth and family, as well as their community.
7. Individualized. A customized set of strategies, supports, and services should be developed and implemented that are customized to the individual youth.
8. Strengths based. The plan should build on the strengths of the youth and family.
9. Persistence. The team should work through challenges together until the goals of the wraparound plan have been accomplished.
10. Outcome based. The wraparound plan should include goals and objectives that are measurable and observable, and should ensure that progress is regularly monitored and data are used to inform plan revisions.

A model program, the **Intensive Aftercare Program (IAP)**, was previously funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) as an intensive, community-based aftercare research and demonstration project. IAP proposed five principles for effective aftercare programming:

1. Preparing youth for progressively increased responsibility and freedom in the community
2. Facilitating youth-community interaction and involvement
3. Working with both the offender and targeted community support systems (for example, families, peers, schools, and employers) on qualities needed for constructive interaction and the youth’s successful community adjustment
4. Developing new resources and supports where needed

- 
5. Monitoring and testing the youth and the community on their ability to deal with each other productively

A program that embodied these core principles was subsequently developed and piloted in three States. This pilot program was so well received that after the project ended in June 2000, a technical assistance and training program emerged, which established the **IAP Juvenile Reintegration and Aftercare Center**.<sup>bb</sup>

### **A. PRACTICES SPECIFIC TO FOLLOWING UP ON RECORDS DURING AFTERCARE**

Once a youth leaves the facility, follow-up data on educational outcomes should be collected on an ongoing basis. Collecting follow-up data allows State administrators and program managers to gain a better understanding of how effective the transition programming is in their State and/or district. It also gives parties at the State and local level information they need for improving transition policies and procedures. Not collecting follow-up data could make the evaluation of transition programming difficult and limit future improvements. The following strategy can be used by program managers when considering records transfer and follow-up procedures after a youth has left the system.

#### **Strategy One: Collaborate and Communicate With Individuals and Agencies to Track Progress and Collect Follow-Up Data**

Administrators and program managers should **identify and meet with collaborators** from other districts, schools, agencies (e.g., mental health), community partners, family members, and other parties. They should determine the procedures for collecting youth data after release and discuss steps to overcome any challenges that arise when trying to collect data. Also, **the timeframes** for collecting youth data post-release (e.g., 6 months, 12 months) and the type of information to be collected should be agreed on. Every effort should be made to **include the youth and his or her family** in this planning process, because depending on the State and/or district, their permission may be needed before follow-up data can be collected.

### **B. PRACTICES SPECIFIC TO FAMILY INVOLVEMENT DURING AFTERCARE**

After a youth is released, the family needs to continue to receive long-term and enduring support to promote positive interaction with their child as they readjust back to the community.<sup>35</sup> Below are details on how this can be done.

#### **Strategy One: Provide Continued Support to the Family**

During the period of reintegration, it is important to **provide continued support to the family**. This may include the following:

- Clinical home visits that analyze the family living situation to best prepare the youth for eventual return

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<sup>bb</sup> See <http://www.csus.edu/ssis/cdcps/iap.htm> for more information. Also see <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/201800.pdf> for summaries of additional model programs.

- Participation in parent-to-parent support groups
- Participation in family and in parental counseling
- Family intervention and training services

## NEXT STEPS

In the Appendices is a self-study tool specific to this stage of transition. The tool will help you gather applicable institutional data on your transition processes, determine your status in implementing key strategies, and plan next steps in program improvement efforts. Additionally, resources specific to this stage have been compiled as examples of how States are implementing the presented strategies. For each document presented below, the source, a Web site to access the document, and a brief description are provided. Resources to be used during aftercare include: a re-entry checklist developed by the National GAINS Center for Mental Health Services, a youth record developed by the Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators (CJCA), and an aftercare treatment plan.

<b>Resources for Aftercare</b>
<b>Follow-Up and Tracking</b>
<p><b>Re-Entry Checklist</b>  <b>Source:</b> National GAINS Center for Mental Health Services  <b>URL:</b> <a href="http://gainscenter.samhsa.gov/swfs/Reentry_Checklist.swf">http://gainscenter.samhsa.gov/swfs/Reentry_Checklist.swf</a>  <b>Description:</b> The National GAINS Center Re-entry Checklist tracks the services and supports that youth with mental health needs will need after release. It also tracks the steps that facility staff members have taken to assist them with these needs during incarceration.</p>
<p><b>Youth Record</b>  <b>Source:</b> Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators (CJCA)  <b>URL:</b> <a href="http://pbstandards.org/DocLib/YouthRecord_%20October%202008.pdf">http://pbstandards.org/DocLib/YouthRecord_%20October%202008.pdf</a>  <b>Description:</b> This form is used to collect and maintain information on youth after they have exited the facility. It allows facility staff to complete a comprehensive questionnaire on the youth, from entry to aftercare, based on the services they received during residency.</p>
<b>Aftercare Treatment Plan</b>
<p><b>Aftercare Treatment Plan (see Attachment A of this document)</b>  <b>Source:</b> South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice Office of Policy and Planning Reintegration Initiative  <b>URL:</b> <a href="http://www.State.sc.us/djj/pdfs/Reintegration-Program-Manual.pdf">http://www.State.sc.us/djj/pdfs/Reintegration-Program-Manual.pdf</a>  <b>Description:</b> The aftercare treatment plan (starts on page A-1) is a tool for facility personnel to detail how the youth is to be supported and provided with services after release. It includes components such as areas of serious concern, family strengths and needs, personal goal-setting, and peer associations.</p>

If an agency, organization, or publisher wishes to suggest additional documents or resources for this Toolkit, it may submit a request to [ndtac@air.org](mailto:ndtac@air.org). NDTAC will review the information and consider it for inclusion in a future version of the Toolkit.

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**ATTACHMENT A**  
**SELF-STUDY AND PLANNING TOOL**

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## **SELF-STUDY AND PLANNING TOOL**

The self-study tool is designed to help facilities and institutional schools reflect on their use of key strategies related to youth transitioning into, through, and out of the juvenile justice system. The ultimate purpose of the self-study tool is to have juvenile justice facilities prioritize the strategies presented in this document, assess the current level of implementation of each strategy, and then make a plan for revising current processes to make better use of the presented strategies. Strategies are organized into sections that parallel the toolkit: 1) General Transition Strategies, 2) Stage 1: Entry into the justice system, 3) Stage 2: Residence, 4) Stage 3: Exit from incarceration, and 5) Stage 4: Aftercare. Because the strategies in the first section, General Transition Strategies, are broad, specific sub-strategies are presented for each strategy.

To complete the tool, assign each strategy a priority level (i.e., low, medium, high). Ideally, a multidisciplinary team of school and facility staff would convene to set priorities. The priority level might also be informed by other planning and systemic initiatives of the institution. Then examine the evidence of practice for each strategy to determine its current level of implementation.

Once you have collected all the data, analyze your findings. Review all high-priority strategies and their current level of implementation. Select areas for improvement by highest priority and lowest level of implementation.

After the tool has been completed and the information analyzed, develop a plan for action based on your findings. A form at the end of this section allows you to log next steps, the resources required to proceed, the responsible parties, and the evidence you can monitor to track your progress.

## General Transition Strategies

Priority Level			Strategy	Level of Implementation				
Low	Medium	High		1. Not currently implementing	2. Planning/ preparing for implementation	3. Beginning to implement	4. Implementing with some regularity	5. Consistently implemented
<b>General</b>								
			<p>I. Communicate openly and strategically with other individuals involved in the transition process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure interagency/intersystem collaboration</li> <li>• Clearly define and articulate roles and responsibilities</li> <li>• Use team-based transition planning</li> <li>• Establish contractual agreements</li> <li>• Establish regular and consistent communication with youth/ family</li> </ul>					
			<p>II. Develop a transition plan and monitor progress</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a transition plan</li> <li>• Maintain ongoing monitoring and tracking</li> <li>• Provide long-term follow-up</li> </ul>					
			<p>III. Provide a range of supports</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assign a mentor/adult advocate</li> <li>• Provide pre-release training</li> <li>• Conduct pre-release visits and “admission interviews”</li> <li>• Offer social and emotional learning and supports</li> <li>• Provide special education and/or English language development (ELD), if appropriate</li> <li>• Develop youth-guided and family-driven wraparound approaches that provide strengths-based services</li> <li>• Provide transitional counseling</li> <li>• Use youth development services</li> </ul>					

## General Transition Strategies

Priority Level			Strategy	Level of Implementation				
Low	Medium	High		1. Not currently implementing	2. Planning/ preparing for implementation	3. Beginning to implement	4. Implementing with some regularity	5. Consistently implemented
<b>General (cont.)</b>								
			IV. Conduct regular and rigorous evaluation of transition programs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collect and analyze data for formative and summative purposes</li> <li>• Collect data from multiple sources, ensuring that multiple perspectives are represented</li> <li>• Collect data reflecting outcomes and progress at all stages, including post-transition data</li> <li>• Use data to inform program improvement efforts</li> <li>• Make data findings publicly available, demonstrating progress and documenting continued commitment to education and transition outcomes</li> </ul>					
			V. Ensure that adequate funds are allocated to transition services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine the level of effort and materials required to deliver adequate transition services</li> <li>• Earmark adequate funds for transition services that reflect current and anticipated future demand</li> <li>• Explore funding options for transition services, including Title I, Part D</li> </ul>					
			VI. Other:					
			VII. Other:					

## General Transition Strategies

Priority Level			Strategy	Level of Implementation				
Low	Medium	High		1. Not currently implementing	2. Planning/ preparing for implementation	3. Beginning to implement	4. Implementing with some regularity	5. Consistently implemented
<b>Records Transfer</b>								
			I. Ensure that records are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accurate</li> <li>• Complete</li> <li>• Useful</li> <li>• Timely</li> <li>• Confidential</li> </ul>					
			II. Identify pertinent Federal, State and local laws and regulations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn/review Federal, State, and local laws concerning the transfer and sharing of youths' records</li> <li>• Learn/review Federal, State, and local laws concerning youth confidentiality</li> </ul>					
			III. Collaborate and communicate with all involved individuals and agencies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish what information to include in a student's record and create a timeline</li> <li>• Delegate responsibilities</li> <li>• Enlist the help and support of family members</li> <li>• Establish follow-up procedures</li> </ul>					
			IV. Develop and use an electronic data system <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish an electronic data system to maintain youths' records</li> <li>• Hire data clerks and/or train existing personnel to manage records</li> </ul>					

## General Transition Strategies

Priority Level			Strategy	Level of Implementation				
Low	Medium	High		1. Not currently implementing	2. Planning/ preparing for implementation	3. Beginning to implement	4. Implementing with some regularity	5. Consistently implemented
			VI. Other:					
<b>Records Transfer (cont.)</b>								
			VII. Other:					
<b>Family Involvement</b>								
			<p>I. Help families overcome barriers and make the environment welcoming to families</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help family members overcome any initial hesitation about involvement</li> <li>• Reassure parents that their child's behavior does not reflect on them as parents</li> <li>• Communicate to family members that school is a place for education, whereas the institution/facility is where the child is held accountable</li> <li>• Provide an array of opportunities for involvement</li> <li>• Assess each family's level of involvement and act accordingly</li> </ul>					
			<p>II. Communicate with families in a manner that is comfortable and accessible</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Be respectful and culturally competent in interactions</li> <li>• Continue to reach out to families, even if they seem disconnected</li> <li>• Use multiple modes of communication</li> </ul>					

## General Transition Strategies

Priority Level			Strategy	Level of Implementation				
Low	Medium	High		1. Not currently implementing	2. Planning/ preparing for implementation	3. Beginning to implement	4. Implementing with some regularity	5. Consistently implemented
<b>Family Involvement (cont.)</b>								
			VI. Other:					
			VII. Other:					

**Stage 1: Entrance Into the System**

Priority Level			Strategy	Level of Implementation				
Low	Medium	High		1. Not currently implementing	2. Planning/ preparing for implementation	3. Beginning to implement	4. Implementing with some regularity	5. Consistently implemented
<b>General</b>								
			I. Conduct intake assessments					
			II. Assemble a transition team and develop a transition plan					
			III. Clearly define roles and responsibilities of individuals involved in youth transition to aid in open communication					
			IV. Track and monitor youth progress					
			V. Refer youth to diversion or community-based programs, when appropriate					
			VI. Other:					
			VII. Other:					
<b>Records Transfer</b>								
			I. Request records that will allow you to make appropriate referrals and provide needed services and supports.					
			II. Identify a single person to manage all youth records on entry					

**Stage 1: Entrance Into the System**

Priority Level			Strategy	Level of Implementation				
Low	Medium	High		1. Not currently implementing	2. Planning/ preparing for implementation	3. Beginning to implement	4. Implementing with some regularity	5. Consistently implemented
<b>Records Transfer (cont.)</b>								
			III. Other:					
			IV. Other:					
<b>Family Involvement</b>								
			I. Make support systems available to families					
			II. Provide the family with an orientation to the school program and educational opportunities available					
			III. Request family help in obtaining educational records					
			IV. Other:					

**Stage 1: Entrance Into the System**

Priority Level			Strategy	Level of Implementation				
Low	Medium	High		1. Not currently implementing	2. Planning/ preparing for implementation	3. Beginning to implement	4. Implementing with some regularity	5. Consistently implemented
			V. Other:					

## Stage 2: Residence

Priority Level			Strategy	Level of Implementation				
Low	Medium	High		1. Not currently implementing	2. Planning/ preparing for implementation	3. Beginning to implement	4. Implementing with some regularity	5. Consistently implemented
<b>General</b>								
			I. Continue activities initiated at entry					
			II. Provide pre-release training and supports					
			III. Ensure appropriate educational placements					
			IV. Other:					
			V. Other:					
<b>Records Maintenance</b>								
			I. Make sure records maintenance procedures are well defined and clearly communicated to staff					
			II. Designate one staff member to be responsible for maintaining youth records					

## Stage 2: Residence

Priority Level			Strategy	Level of Implementation				
Low	Medium	High		1. Not currently implementing	2. Planning/ preparing for implementation	3. Beginning to implement	4. Implementing with some regularity	5. Consistently implemented
			III. Regularly update youth records, including conducting regular assessments to document youth progress					
<b>Records Maintenance (cont.)</b>								
			IV. Send progress updates to family, home school, and other members of the transition team					
			V. Other:					
			VI. Other:					
<b>Family Involvement</b>								
			I. Offer programs to families to develop and hone their parenting skills					
			II. Enhance family involvement through family counseling					
			III. Continue to make the school an inviting place to families					

## Stage 2: Residence

Priority Level			Strategy	Level of Implementation				
Low	Medium	High		1. Not currently implementing	2. Planning/ preparing for implementation	3. Beginning to implement	4. Implementing with some regularity	5. Consistently implemented
			V. Other:					
<b>Family Involvement (cont.)</b>								
			IV. Other:					

### Stage 3: Exit from the System

Priority Level			Strategy	Level of Implementation				
Low	Medium	High		1. Not currently implementing	2. Planning/ preparing for implementation	3. Beginning to implement	4. Implementing with some regularity	5. Consistently implemented
<b>General</b>								
			I. Begin pre-release information sharing					
			II. Conduct a pre-release visit to the school					
			III. Start transitional counseling and continue mentoring					
			IV. Other:					
			V. Other:					
<b>Records Maintenance</b>								
			I. Release youth records in a timely and secure manner					
			II. Collaborate and communicate with individuals and agencies to overcome challenges and barriers associated with sharing youth information					

### Stage 3: Exit from the System

Priority Level			Strategy	Level of Implementation				
Low	Medium	High		1. Not currently implementing	2. Planning/ preparing for implementation	3. Beginning to implement	4. Implementing with some regularity	5. Consistently implemented
<b>Records Maintenance (cont.)</b>								
			III. Other:					
			IV. Other:					
<b>Family Involvement</b>								
			I. Engage families in all decision-making processes					
			II. Prepare families for changes in their child					
			III. Make the transition process as gradual as possible					
			IV. Other:					

### Stage 3: Exit from the System

Priority Level			Strategy	Level of Implementation				
Low	Medium	High		1. Not currently implementing	2. Planning/ preparing for implementation	3. Beginning to implement	4. Implementing with some regularity	5. Consistently implemented
			V. Other:					

## Stage 4: Aftercare

Priority Level			Strategy	Level of Implementation				
Low	Medium	High		1. Not currently implementing	2. Planning/ preparing for implementation	3. Beginning to implement	4. Implementing with some regularity	5. Consistently implemented
<b>General</b>								
			I. Provide transitional counseling					
			II. Ensure follow-up and monitoring					
			III. Supply wraparound support services					
			IV. Other:					
			V. Other:					
<b>Records Maintenance</b>								
			I. Collaborate and communicate with individuals and agencies to track progress and collect follow-up data					

## Stage 4: Aftercare

Priority Level			Strategy	Level of Implementation				
Low	Medium	High		1. Not currently implementing	2. Planning/ preparing for implementation	3. Beginning to implement	4. Implementing with some regularity	5. Consistently implemented
			II. Other:					
<b>Records Maintenance (cont.)</b>								
			III. Other:					
<b>Family Involvement</b>								
			I. Provide continued support to the family					
			II. Other:					
			III. Other:					

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**Improving Transition Practices: Plan of Action**

<b>Strategy Identified as Needing Improvement</b>	<b>Target Area(s)</b>	<b>Resources Needed</b>	<b>People Responsible</b>	<b>Evidence of Change</b>