

Student Transition Plan - Best Practices

Effective transition for youth in the juvenile justice system 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” (Griller Clark, 2006).

This definition identifies three elements of successful transition:

- It is coordinated.
- It is an outcome-oriented process.
- It promotes successful movement between the facility and the community.

The first element—coordination—requires individuals from multiple systems to work together to plan for and ensure that youth involved in the juvenile justice system receive appropriate support services at all stages. The primary individuals involved are the youth and his or her family or adult advocate. A transition coordinator or specialist, case manager, or placement specialist is also extremely important in leading and coordinating the process. Others who should be involved in the process include court and probation personnel; administrators, teachers, and staff from detention and corrections institutions; service providers from other agencies or programs (e.g., mental health, substance abuse, child welfare); and personnel from the community, including schools and employers. Ultimately, the individuals required to support the youth will depend on the unique needs of that child and his or her transition plan.

The second element—an outcome-oriented process—focuses on the goals of successful youth engagement with school and/or employment, avoidance of return to the JJ system, and reduction of the likelihood of future entry into the adult criminal justice system. Post-release engagement in school and/or work is critical to both short- and long-term transition success and is not just the responsibility of the youth and the JJ agency coordinating the youth’s release but a collective responsibility of the community and all those involved in the transition process (Mathur & Griller Clark, 2014).

The third element—successful movement between the facility and the community—requires awareness of all the systems and policies in place to help support the youth in navigating these systems and becoming positively engaged with his or her community. It also involves the successful movement of records and processes to support the youth in acquiring appropriate academic, career and technical, behavioral, social, and independent-living skills with a focus on preparing youth for college or career.

An effective transition process and high-quality support services within that process are essential for a youth to successfully live in the community following secure care.

It is critical that the transition process begin as soon as a youth enters the juvenile justice system.

Records

The efficient transfer of youth records and related information is vital to a youth's success because it allows continuity of learning, services, and supports. Records give staff the essential information they need to evaluate and accommodate the needs of youth as they transition into, through; and out of the JJ system.

- 1. Ensure accurate, complete, useful, timely, and confidential records and records transfer.**
- 2. Identify and comply with pertinent Federal, State, and local laws.**
- 3. Collaborate and communicate with all involved individuals and agencies.**
- 4. Develop and use an electronic data system.**

The adjudicated youth district point-of-contact oversees.

- (1) Self- Directed Future planning
- (2) the Wrap-Around Team
- (3) Family Support
- (4) Coordination with Legal Services
- (5) Coordination with School Curriculum
- (6) the Career Mentor.

“The Wrap-Around Team” is a “family-centered” group of service providers selected to help the young person implement their “self-directed future plan.” Typically, the team includes the young person, a family member, probation or parole officer, special education specialist, case manager (for mental health, substance abuse, or other disability), career mentor.

The team meets on a quarterly basis after the young person's release to insure that services are coordinated and that the target youth's needs are met.

10 Principals of Wraparound Services

1. **Family Voice and Choice** – Family and youth perspectives are intentionally made known and prioritized throughout all phases of the wraparound process. All planning is grounded in family members’ perspectives and the team strives to provide options and choices. The plan reflects family values and preferences.
2. **Team Based** – The wraparound team consists of individuals who are approved by the family and include members of their household, members of their extended family or friends, members from their community, and members of existing service agencies.
3. **Natural Supports** – The team actively seeks out and encourages the participation of individuals from a family’s network of family and community relationships. The wraparound plan reflects activities that draw on the sources of natural support.
4. **Collaboration** – Team members work together and share responsibility for developing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating a family’s wraparound plan. The plan reflects a blending of team members’ perspectives, obligations, and resources. The plan guides and coordinates each team member’s work towards meeting the team’s goals.
5. **Community Based** – The wraparound team implements service and support strategies that take place in the most inclusive, responsive, accessible, and least restrictive settings possible; and that safely promote child and family integration into home and community life.
6. **Culturally Competent** – The wraparound process demonstrates respect for and builds on the values, preferences, beliefs, culture, and identity of the child/youth and family, and their community.
7. **Individualized** – To achieve the goals laid out in the wraparound plan, the team develops and implements a customized set of strategies, supports, and services that are unique to each individual family.
8. **Strengths Based** – The wraparound process and the wraparound plan identify, build on, and enhance the capabilities, knowledge, skills, and assets of the child and family, their community, and other team members.
9. **Persistence** – Despite challenges, the team persists in working toward the goals included in the wraparound plan until the team reaches agreement that a formal wraparound process is no longer required.
10. **Outcomes Based** – The team ties the goals and strategies of the wraparound plan to observable or measurable indicators of success, monitors progress in terms of these indicators, and revises the plan accordingly.

Overcoming barriers faced by parents/guardians

A study by the American Bar Association Center on Children and the Law; identified strategies for improving parental involvement, including:

- (1) Scheduling meetings and hearings to accommodate working parents.
- (2) Informing parents of the importance of the process and decisions being made.
- (3) Reducing probation officer caseloads.
- (4) Allowing volunteers to work with parents, such as CASAs (Court Appointed Special Advocates)
- (5) Clarifying who is responsible for involving the parent.
- (6) Increasing the access to information between various agencies.
- (7) Increasing funding for community programs that work with families to provide more information about the families to the courts for individualized resolution of cases.

Copies of the plan should be sent to the following

The young person for whom the plan is written for.
The young person's parents or guardians.
The young person's legal counsel.
The young person's probation officer.
The young person's community mental health center professional
The prosecuting attorney.
The adjudicated youth district point-of-contact where the student will attend.

Experts in the field recommend a comprehensive approach to reentry that combines the following types of evidence-based strategies for supporting the successful reentry of youth, both with and without disabilities, into their communities:

Individualized transition plans accompanied by progress monitoring (Larson & Turner, 2002)

Direct academic instruction (Larson & Turner, 2002; Palmer, 1996)

Vocational and life skills training (Larson & Turner, 2002; Palmer, 1996)

Social skills training (Larson & Turner, 2002; Gendreau, 1996)

Implementation of behavior management systems (Larson & Turner, 2002)

Cognitive therapy to change attitudes and expectations (Larson, 1998; Larson & Turner, 2002; Palmer, 1996)

A transition portfolio may contain the following educational elements.

- (1) The IEP
- (2) Special education rights
- (3) Completed psychoeducational evaluations
- (4) Academic assessments
- (5) School transcripts
- (6) Any certificates or diplomas earned by the youth
- (7) Vocational assessment results
- (8) The youth's résumé
- (9) A transition resource packet
- (10) Course credit analysis
- (11) The ITP
- (12) Work samples

Regular Monitoring and Tracking

To ensure that programs and services meet the transitional needs of students and families impacted by involvement in the JJ system, the transition process and outcomes should be regularly monitored and tracked. The regular monitoring and tracking of key components of a youth's successful transition can be collected and analyzed by the transition coordinator on a regular basis. Data should be collected on individual, system, and community outcomes. In addition, the inclusion of multiple sources of data (e.g., self-assessments, independent program evaluations, monitoring reports) provides a broader perspective, which can increase the usefulness of the data. Furthermore, using multiple methods of data collection (e.g., questionnaires, surveys, checklists, interviews, documentation review, observation, and focus groups) ensures a more comprehensive approach to program monitoring. Following are some examples of program process and student outcome data that can be useful in monitoring transition focused on improving educational outcomes.

Examples of transition data collected for individual youth include the following:

- Number of days enrolled in school
- Number of passing grades or credits/courses completed
- Hours of career and technical education/training
- Number of career and technical certificates earned
- Number/percentage of youth graduating from high school
- Number of days it took for a student to receive an IEP meeting upon reentry to school
- Did student decide to pursue a GED, traditional high school diploma, career technical programming?
- Did student remain in school or drop out within 30, 60, 90, or 120 days following release?
- Did student reenter the JJ system?

Examples of transition data collected for systems include the following:

- Number of youths enrolled in school
- Number of youths enrolled in CTE courses
- Number of credits awarded
- Number of career and technical certificates awarded

Transition plan questions for student workforce development integration:

- Are specific staff designated to oversee the development and implementation of workforce development services for youth in facilities and in the community, including the formation of partnerships?
- Do all youth (regardless of age or educational level) receive a career interest survey as well as an employment skills assessment at intake?
- Are soft skills trainings available, such as interviewing skills, resume building, job searching, standards of professionalism, conflict resolution, and teamwork, as well as guidance for completing financial aid and college applications?
- Is access provided to onsite and/or online CTE coursework that can lead to industry- or employer-recognized credentials and certifications?
- Is hands-on learning promoted, ideally through on, or off-site real work experiences?
- Are workforce development goals and services incorporated into youth's case and reentry plans, and review meetings include discussions on how best to support youth's long-term career readiness and success in the community.
- Are paid training, apprenticeships, internships, and/or actual jobs in the community offered, which include incentives for achieving key milestones or certifications?

Ongoing training and support help youths find and maintain employment, meet employer expectations, and overcome barriers to transitioning to independence (e.g., access to housing, transportation, etc.).