

# Checklist for Juvenile Justice Agency Leaders and Managers

**THE FOLLOWING CHECKLIST** will help your agency conduct a detailed assessment of how current policy and practice align with what research has shown works to reduce recidivism and improve other outcomes for youth involved with the juvenile justice system. The best practices outlined in this checklist are grouped by the four core principles detailed in [Core Principles for Reducing Recidivism and Improving Outcomes for Youth in the Juvenile Justice System](#). You can use this hard-copy checklist to assess your agency, or [complete your assessment online](#) and receive an automated scoring of your results and identification of areas for improvement.\*

To complete this checklist, you should compile documentation and/or have complete knowledge of your agency’s policies and procedures. To the extent possible, you should also review available assessment, supervision, service, and outcome data, and collect wide-ranging input from agency staff and contract providers to accurately assess agency practice.

In instances where policy exists or practices always align with the question posed, choose “Always (Yes)” as your response option. In instances where practices align 50 percent of the time or more, choose “Most of the Time.” For practices that happen as described less than 50 percent of the time, choose “Some of the Time.” For questions where policies do not exist or practices never happen as described, choose “Never (No).” Some questions may not apply to your particular agency or to the youth under your agency’s jurisdiction; in those instances, choose “Not Applicable.” Do not use the “Not Applicable” option to indicate that your agency does not have a specific policy or practice.

When completing the checklist, please keep in mind that the goal of the assessment is to more fully understand agency practices and they compare to what research has shown works to reduce recidivism. Accurate identification of agency and system needs allows for the development of targeted plans for improvement.

## PRINCIPLE 1: Base supervision, service, and resource-allocation decisions on the results of validated risk and needs assessments.

Always (Yes)	Most of the Time	Some of the Time	Never (No)	Not Applicable	Youth dispositions and supervision are based primarily on risk of reoffending.
					1. Agency policy requires that all youth receive a risk screen and/or full risk assessment prior to disposition.
					2. A risk screen and/or full risk assessment is completed for all youth prior to disposition.
					3. Results from the risk screen and/or full risk assessment are used as a primary factor in diversion decisions made by the agency.
					4. Youth who are assessed as being at low risk of reoffending are diverted from adjudication and formal system involvement.
					5. The agency uses a dispositional matrix or guideline that includes youth risk level to guide diversion decisions.

\*To complete this form online, please go to <https://csgjusticecenter.org/youth/about-interactive-checklist/>.

Always (Yes)	Most of the Time	Some of the Time	Never (No)	Not Applicable	<b>Youth dispositions and supervision are based primarily on risk of reoffending.</b>
					6. Agency staff use risk screen and/or full risk assessment results when making disposition recommendations.
					7. The court receives a youth's full risk assessment results prior to that youth's disposition hearing.
					8. Results from full risk assessments are used as a primary factor in disposition decisions made by the court.
					9. The agency uses a dispositional matrix or guideline that includes youth risk level to guide disposition decisions.
					10. Decisions made by the court regarding a youth's expected length of time on community supervision or in a residential facility are based primarily on a youth's risk of reoffending.
					11. Supervision requirements are primarily based on the youth's risk level, with high- and moderate-risk youth receiving more contact from the supervising officer than low-risk youth.
					12. Youth committed to state-run secure facilities are high risk and/or have committed a violent felony offense.
					13. Upon admission, youth committed to state-run secure facilities are assessed to determine their risk of reoffending and to identify the primary needs associated with their delinquency.
					14. Security level and placement location for youth committed to state custody are based on risk of reoffending and need for specific services.
					15. Youth supervised in the community receive risk assessments throughout their supervision, with reassessments occurring at least every six months or after significant life events.
					16. Youth in residential facilities receive risk assessments throughout their residential stay, with reassessments occurring at least every six months or after significant life events.
					17. Agency policy guides the length of time a youth spends on community supervision or in a residential facility and includes consideration of the youth's risk of reoffending.
					18. The agency collects information on youth in electronic data systems.
					19. Data on referral, disposition, and supervision type is collected for all youth including referral, disposition, and supervision begin and end dates.

Always (Yes)	Most of the Time	Some of the Time	Never (No)	Not Applicable	<b>Youth dispositions and supervision are based primarily on risk of reoffending.</b>
					20. Electronic data includes information on residential and detention facility placement.
					21. Risk and needs assessment data is collected in an electronic data system.

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Always (Yes)	Most of the Time	Some of the Time	Never (No)	Not Applicable	<b>Validated screens and assessments are conducted to identify youth needs, and youth are matched to services that address the needs associated with their delinquency.</b>
					22. Agency policy requires all youth to be screened for mental health and substance use prior to disposition, with full assessments ordered if warranted.
					23. Youth are screened for mental health needs prior to disposition.
					24. Youth who screen positive for mental health needs receive a full assessment prior to disposition.
					25. Youth are screened for substance use prior to disposition.
					26. Youth who screen positive for substance use receive a full assessment prior to disposition.
					27. Agency policy requires that youth are matched to programs that address the primary needs associated with their delinquency as identified by assessment results.
					28. The programs and services a youth receives are based on their assessment results.
					29. Youth participate in programs and receive services that directly address the primary needs associated with their delinquent behavior.
					30. Low-risk youth receive minimal supervision, programs, and services.
					31. Low-risk youth with significant mental health or substance use needs are diverted to community behavioral health care providers for services, when appropriate.

Always (Yes)	Most of the Time	Some of the Time	Never (No)	Not Applicable	Validated screens and assessments are conducted to identify youth needs, and youth are matched to services that address the needs associated with their delinquency.
					32. Intensive programs and services serve only moderate- and high-risk youth.
					33. Low-, moderate-, and high-risk youth do not participate together in the same programs and services.
					34. The length of time a youth spends in a program is based on the youth's risk level and needs.
					35. The agency makes supervision discharge decisions based on a youth's progress in treatment and reduction of risk while on community supervision.
					36. The agency makes facility release decisions based on a youth's progress in treatment and reduction of risk while in the residential facility.
					37. The agency collects information on the programs and services youth receive while under supervision, including program completion.
					38. Information on the programs and services youth receive while under supervision is collected in an electronic database.

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Always (Yes)	Most of the Time	Some of the Time	Never (No)	Not Applicable	Agency policy and practice emphasize the importance of using the results of screens and assessments in supervision and service decisions.
					39. Agency policy guides how and when risk and other screens and assessments must be conducted.
					40. Agency policy requires ongoing training on how to conduct and score risk and other screens and assessments.
					41. Agency staff receive ongoing training on how to conduct and score risk and other screens and assessments.
					42. Agency staff incorporate results of risk and other screens and assessments into their supervision practices.

Always (Yes)	Most of the Time	Some of the Time	Never (No)	Not Applicable	Agency policy and practice emphasize the importance of using the results of screens and assessments in supervision and service decisions.
					43. Agency staff are trained on how to develop case plans based on the information gathered through risk and other screens and assessments.
					44. Service providers must specify the population their program or residential facility is intended to serve, including youth risk level and needs criteria eligibility.
					45. The agency has written descriptions of all programs and services to which youth are referred and descriptions include youth risk level and needs criteria eligibility.
					46. Agency policy details the process for referring youth to programs and services.
					47. Agency staff follow the agency's referral policies when referring youth to programs and services.
					48. The agency reviews screens and assessments for accuracy and consistency at least annually.
					49. The agency provides feedback to staff on the accuracy and consistency of the screens and assessments they complete.

**PRINCIPLE 2: Adopt and effectively implement programs and services demonstrated to reduce recidivism and improve other youth outcomes, and use data to evaluate system performance and direct system improvements.**

Always (Yes)	Most of the Time	Some of the Time	Never (No)	Not Applicable	Youth receive services shown by research to reduce recidivism and improve other youth outcomes.
					1. The agency requires that all programs and practices provided by the agency have been shown through research to reduce recidivism.
					2. Agency programs and practices are focused on positive youth change and motivation.
					3. Programs and practices focused on discipline, control and/or punishment are not used by the agency.

Always (Yes)	Most of the Time	Some of the Time	Never (No)	Not Applicable	Youth receive services shown by research to reduce recidivism and improve other youth outcomes.
					4. Surveillance of youth on community supervision is used only for youth as an alternative to detention or as a graduated sanction.
					5. The programs and practices used by the agency are research based.
					6. Agency programs and practices stress therapeutic approaches and skill building for youth.
					7. Agency contracts require service providers to provide research-based programs to the youth they serve.
					8. The services youth receive while in residential facilities are research based and address the primary needs associated with their delinquent behavior.

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Always (Yes)	Most of the Time	Some of the Time	Never (No)	Not Applicable	Youth receive services that are implemented in a manner consistent with research and the intended design of the program.
					9. The agency provides technical assistance to service providers to ensure that their practices are research based and tailored to the primary needs of the youth they serve.
					10. The agency monitors and/or audits programs to ensure that they have been implemented and are operating as designed.
					11. Program and service quality—including staffing, curricula, and program delivery—is reviewed at least annually.
					12. The outcomes for youth participating in programs and services are measured at least annually to determine program effectiveness.
					13. Service providers receive written feedback at least annually about the outcomes of youth participating in their programs and services.
					14. Youth outcomes, broken down by facility, program, and/or service provider, are reported to agency management and are available to stakeholders.

Always (Yes)	Most of the Time	Some of the Time	Never (No)	Not Applicable	<b>Youth receive services that are implemented in a manner consistent with research and the intended design of the program.</b>
					15. Programs that are not effective in reducing recidivism and/or improving youth outcomes do not receive continued funding from the agency and youth are no longer referred to those programs.
					16. Performance expectations related to program and service delivery and youth outcomes are included in all service provider contracts and providers that do not meet expectations do not receive continued funding or referrals.
					17. Service providers are required to provide written descriptions of the services they provide and the expected length of stay in programs and residential facilities.
					18. The agency verifies that programs and residential facilities are serving the youth identified as the program's or facility's target population.
					19. The length of time youth spend in community programs is tied to the youth's primary needs and is consistent with the expected length of stay.
					20. The length of time youth spend in residential facilities is tied to the youth's primary needs and is consistent with the expected length of stay.

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Always (Yes)	Most of the Time	Some of the Time	Never (No)	Not Applicable	<b>Data on key performance measures are collected and used to drive system decisions and improvements.</b>
					21. The agency has established performance measures and reviews system performance at least annually.
					22. The agency collects case-level data on all youth served.
					23. Case-level data is collected in an electronic database in a manner that can be easily quantified and analyzed.
					24. Case-level data is collected at all points in the system and for all services a youth receives.
					25. Data on the programs and services youth receive are not primarily collected through written comments in case-planning documents and case notes.

Always (Yes)	Most of the Time	Some of the Time	Never (No)	Not Applicable	Data on key performance measures are collected and used to drive system decisions and improvements.
					26. Data on screens and assessments are collected electronically and can be quantified and analyzed.
					27. The agency uses the data it collects to improve the supervision, programs, and services it provides.
					28. Data to calculate recidivism is available in an electronic database and can be analyzed.
					29. Youth outcome measures tied to the services youth receive are identified and the data to calculate these measures is collected in an electronic database.
					30. One- and two-year recidivism rates are calculated for youth supervised by the agency.
					31. Recidivism is analyzed by youth risk level, supervision type, residential facility, service provider, and program/service received.
					32. The agency captures information to determine assessment, supervision, and program quality and conducts audits at least annually.
					33. The agency uses information captured on quality assessment audits to improve the supervision, programs, and services it provides.
					34. Agency performance and youth outcome information is provided to agency staff, service providers, policymakers, advocates, and the public.

**PRINCIPLE 3: Employ a coordinated approach across service systems to address youth's needs.**

Always (Yes)	Most of the Time	Some of the Time	Never (No)	Not Applicable	The agency coordinates and shares information with behavioral health care (mental health and substance use) providers to meet the needs of youth.
					1. The agency has a policy that requires relevant screen and assessment results be shared between the agency and behavioral health care providers.
					2. The agency and behavioral health care providers share screen and assessment results.



Always (Yes)	Most of the Time	Some of the Time	Never (No)	Not Applicable	<b>The agency coordinates and shares information with behavioral health care (mental health and substance use) providers to meet the needs of youth.</b>
					3. Agency staff and behavioral health care providers communicate about youth participation and progress in treatment.
					4. Agency staff and behavioral health care providers collaborate in case planning whenever possible.
					5. Cross-system training for juvenile justice staff and behavioral health care providers is conducted at least annually.
					6. MOUs or other agreements are in place that allow for data sharing between the agency and behavioral health care providers.
					7. Behavioral health care providers have access to the agency data system to enter information on assessments, treatment progress, and youth outcomes.
					8. The agency works with behavioral health care providers to improve the availability, accessibility, and quality of mental health and substance use services for youth under the agency's jurisdiction.
					9. Youth with mental health and/or substance use needs receive treatment that matches the level and intensity of their needs.
					10. The agency and behavioral health care providers develop common treatment outcome expectations for youth served in both systems.
					11. The agency is able to access community-based mental health and substance use services and treatment through a state funded behavioral health care provider.

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Always (Yes)	Most of the Time	Some of the Time	Never (No)	Not Applicable	<b>The agency coordinates and shares information with the child welfare system to meet the needs of youth.</b>
					12. The agency has policies in place that promote collaboration with the child welfare system.
					13. The agency is able to identify youth under its supervision who are also being served by the child welfare system.
					14. Youth involved in both the juvenile justice and the child welfare systems go before the same judge for their justice and child welfare system cases.

Always (Yes)	Most of the Time	Some of the Time	Never (No)	Not Applicable	<b>The agency coordinates and shares information with the child welfare system to meet the needs of youth.</b>
					15. Agency and child welfare system staff perform joint case planning whenever possible.
					16. Agency and child welfare systems staff have common outcomes identified for youth served in both systems.
					17. MOUs or other agreements are in place that allow for data sharing between the agency and the child welfare system agency.
					18. Cross-system training for juvenile justice and child welfare system staff is conducted at least annually.

Always (Yes)	Most of the Time	Some of the Time	Never (No)	Not Applicable	<b>The agency coordinates with local school systems and vocational training providers to ensure that youth are engaged in educational and/or vocational programs.</b>
					19. MOUs or other agreements are in place that allow for data sharing between the agency and local schools, including the sharing of attendance and disciplinary information.
					20. The agency has a designated liaison responsible for coordination and communication with local schools.
					21. The agency requires that all residential facilities overseen by the agency adhere to the same curricular, accreditation, and accountability standards as schools in the community.
					22. Community residential facility providers are required to enroll youth in the local school district or provide accredited distance learning to youth residing in the facility.
					23. Educational programming that meets a wide range of education levels and needs, including credit recovery and special education, is available for all youth while in a residential facility.
					24. Vocational and job-readiness training is available to all youth under the agency's jurisdiction.
					25. Youth in residential facilities are required to participate in education or vocational programming.
					26. Youth leaving residential facilities are re-enrolled in school or in an appropriate educational/vocational program within two weeks of release.

Always (Yes)	Most of the Time	Some of the Time	Never (No)	Not Applicable	<b>The agency coordinates with local school systems and vocational training providers to ensure that youth are engaged in educational and/or vocational programs.</b>
					27. Youth's school credits and records are transferred in their entirety and in a timely manner between residential facilities and schools in the community.
					28. The agency collects data on a youth's education status and attendance while they are under supervision.
					29. The agency collects data in an electronic database to track a youth's academic progress while they are under supervision.

**PRINCIPLE 4: Tailor system policies, programs, and supervision to reflect the distinct developmental needs of adolescents.**

Always (Yes)	Most of the Time	Some of the Time	Never (No)	Not Applicable	<b>Youth and families are engaged in system decisions, including case planning and service delivery.</b>
					1. The agency has policies regarding youth and family input into case plans, programming, and reentry planning.
					2. Results from risk and needs screens and assessments are shared with youth and their family.
					3. Youth and their families participate in regular case-planning meetings, including at the beginning of supervision, 30 days prior to release from a residential facility, and 30 days prior to supervision discharge.
					4. Support services and counseling are available to the families of youth on community supervision.
					5. Support services and counseling are available to the families of youth in residential facilities.
					6. The agency schedules office visits and programs at times and in locations that maximize youth and family participation/attendance.
					7. Agency staff receive regular training on how to engage and communicate effectively with youth and their families.
					8. The agency links youth and families to community supports and services prior to discharge from a residential facility.

Always (Yes)	Most of the Time	Some of the Time	Never (No)	Not Applicable	<b>Youth and families are engaged in system decisions, including case planning and service delivery.</b>
					9. Families participate in reentry planning for youth leaving residential facilities.
					10. Youth and their families are surveyed about their experience with the programs and supervision the youth received from the agency.

Always (Yes)	Most of the Time	Some of the Time	Never (No)	Not Applicable	<b>Youth supervision is focused on promoting positive behavior change.</b>
					11. The agency has policies encouraging the use of positive behavior-change strategies.
					12. Youth receive supervision primarily focused on promoting positive behavior change.
					13. The majority of supervision officer time is spent in a role that is supportive of the youth and focuses on the factors most closely associated with youth delinquency.
					14. Staff are trained in motivational interviewing, cognitive behavioral approaches, and/or other methods for engaging with youth and promoting positive behavior change.

Always (Yes)	Most of the Time	Some of the Time	Never (No)	Not Applicable	<b>Youth are held accountable for their actions in a developmentally appropriate manner.</b>
					15. The agency has a graduated sanctions matrix that clearly outlines the appropriate sanction(s) for youth under supervision who do not follow the conditions of their supervision.
					16. The agency has a graduated sanction matrix that considers the youth's risk level and seriousness of the supervision violation.
					17. Staff use a graduated sanction matrix to respond to youth who have violated the terms of their supervision.

Always (Yes)	Most of the Time	Some of the Time	Never (No)	Not Applicable	<b>Youth are held accountable for their actions in a developmentally appropriate manner.</b>
					18. Detention, if needed, is used only as a sanction for a new offense.
					19. The agency has an incentives matrix that provides for consistent incentives for youth under supervision.
					20. Conditions of supervision are easily understood by youth, are realistic, and relate directly to the youth's delinquent behavior.
					21. Staff have the knowledge and resources to provide youth with incentives/rewards for positive behavior.
					22. A youth's ability and readiness to participate is considered prior to requiring a youth to participate in a program or service.
					23. Restorative justice practices (e.g. restitution, community service, or victim mediation) are used to help youth understand and repair the harm caused to victims and communities.

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Always (Yes)	Most of the Time	Some of the Time	Never (No)	Not Applicable	<b>Youth are treated fairly and receive services tailored to their unique needs.</b>
					24. The agency offers gender-specific programs and services.
					25. The agency offers culturally-specific programs and services.
					26. The agency has specific programs and services designed to meet the needs of older youth transitioning to independence.
					27. The agency has specific programs and services designed to meet the needs of youth 12 years old and younger.
					28. Data to identify potential differences in the processing and treatment of youth, including racial and/or ethnic disparities, are collected in an electronic database at system intake, disposition, and other system decision points.

Always (Yes)	Most of the Time	Some of the Time	Never (No)	Not Applicable	<b>Youth are treated fairly and receive services tailored to their unique needs.</b>
					29. Data on potential differences in the processing and treatment of youth are analyzed to determine if and where disparities exist in the system.
					30. If disparities have been identified, the agency takes action to promote more equitable supervision and service decisions.
					31. Staff receive ongoing cultural competence and equity training.