



**BJA**  
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# Supporting Crisis Stabilization for Youth and Young Adults during Reentry

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## **R**esearch points to an overrepresentation of youth with behavioral health needs in the justice system,

with nearly 70 percent having a diagnosable mental health disorder.<sup>1</sup> Because of this, youth and young adults who have had contact with the justice system, have been diverted from the justice system, or are reentering the community from correctional facilities are often at an increased risk of experiencing a crisis.<sup>2</sup> In addition to their increased risk for crisis, this population also has unique and specific crisis stabilization needs when compared to those of adults due to pre-existing and untreated trauma, witnessing violence or being victimized during incarceration, or lack of developmentally appropriate treatment and services that address their behavioral health needs during placement and after release.<sup>3</sup>

In fiscal year 2022, the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), a component of the Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs, launched the [Second Chance Act Improving Adult and Juvenile Crisis Stabilization and Community Reentry \(SCA CSCR\)](#) grant to help communities improve efforts to

address youth and young adult crises and reduce the overrepresentation of youth with behavioral health needs in the justice system. SCA CSCR provides funding to government and community-based entities to deliver clinical and recovery support services that establish treatment, suicide prevention, and continuity of recovery in the community for youth with mental illnesses, substance use disorders, or co-occurring disorders upon their release from a detention or correctional facility, or who have current or prior involvement with the justice system.<sup>4</sup> It also provides training and technical assistance to grantees and the field at large to advance work in this domain.

This brief, developed with support from BJA, provides justice professionals who are responsible for youth and young adult case planning with best practice guidance on how to engage, collaborate, and partner with the systems that can address reentry needs and prevent crises that may lead to future justice system involvement. This guidance is drawn from both relevant research and lessons learned from BJA-funded programs focused on reentry and crisis stabilization among youth and young adults.

## **Six Best Practices Justice and Crisis System Professionals Can Implement**

Many community-based organizations and government agencies lack the services and resources that youth and young adults need for stabilization and ongoing recovery during reentry.

These needs include reengagement with or referrals to educational providers, job readiness training and supported employment opportunities, as well as warm hand-offs to behavioral health care providers that have expertise in serving people their age. Youth and young adults reentering their communities also often require assistance with reintegration into positive social supports; collaborative engagement of family or caregivers, who may require support themselves to ensure the young person's stability; and rebuilding the relationships that were negatively impacted by the trauma of the young person's

experience with the justice system.

Strong cross-coordination between the justice and crisis systems is critical to address the breadth and scope of crisis stabilization needs for youth and young adults. It is also imperative for all agencies to ensure equitable access to culturally responsive, gender-affirming care<sup>5</sup> and supportive services for LGBTQ+ and youth and young adults of color that are reentering the community. Additionally, gender-focused reentry services for girls is necessary to address the disproportionate impact of trauma and resulting mental health issues among that population.<sup>6</sup>

Below are six best practices that reentry and crisis system collaborators can implement to support crisis stabilization needs for youth and young adults reentering the community.

## **1 Build cross-system reentry planning teams to address each person's unique needs.**

As with any successful reentry plan, the planning process for youth and young adults should begin at the time a young person is admitted to a facility or out-of-home program.<sup>7</sup> Teams may include a mix of representatives from correctional or residential facilities, reentry service provider agencies, case managers, behavioral health providers, peer support specialists, various crisis response or triage and

stabilization agencies, supported employment agencies,<sup>8</sup> housing providers, child welfare, family courts, education, community organizations, faith-based organizations, and other entities identified as important by the young person at the center of the reentry planning process. Cross-system teams should be developed with consideration of each agency's capacity to support the unique needs of youth and young adults who are reentering the community after justice system involvement.

## **2 Coordinate behavioral health care to bridge the transition from the facility to the community.**

Youth and young adults should receive validated mental health and substance use screenings—and assessments if warranted by the screening results—within the detention, correctional, or residential facility. Young people who are assessed for and diagnosed with behavioral health conditions should then be connected to treatment within the facility. Since traumatic brain injury and intellectual and developmental disabilities can also lead to the onset of mental health needs or can co-occur with behavioral health diagnoses, it is critical for correctional and residential facilities to also screen for and rule out brain injury.

As part of release planning, reentry teams can provide in-reach or take part in reentry case planning; this reentry process should begin with sufficient time to properly assess youth needs and match appropriate services and supports in the community,<sup>9</sup> however, in order to ensure continuity of care (for mental health, substance use, or co-occurring substance use

and mental health services) with community-based providers that can support long-term recovery and crisis prevention and stabilization.

This warm hand-off process involves benefit and care coordination with community-based organizations and behavioral health providers, hospitals, crisis centers, and juvenile assessment centers to identify which program eligibility requirements need to be met for admission into services. For example, new Medicaid rules require that young people in confinement receive screening and diagnostic assessments, targeted case management, and other services 30 days before and up to 30 days after release, while also suspending—not terminating—Medicaid coverage during confinement.<sup>10</sup> Reentry planning teams should stay up to date on these and other benefits changes to ensure that the young person can seamlessly receive care upon release. Reentry teams should also incorporate proactive crisis prevention planning into all transition plans for youth and young adults with behavioral health needs, including safety planning for young people with histories of intimate partner violence.

## **3 Provide developmentally appropriate gender-affirming, culturally responsive, and gender-focused reentry services as part of case management planning.**

LGBTQ+ and youth and young adults of color are disproportionately incarcerated<sup>11</sup> and less likely to be

connected to appropriate behavioral health care when compared to their non-LGBTQ+ and White peers.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, it is imperative that reentry teams identify and collaborate with agencies that can provide gender-affirming and culturally responsive services as appropriate. Case management plans should include information on services that are developmentally

appropriate and incorporate cultural humility, gender identity, and sexual orientation. The case planning process should also consider the impacts of racial disparities on social determinants of health.<sup>13</sup>

Identified providers should not only have expertise in these areas, including lived experience, but also demonstrate the use of best practices and evidence-

based practices that have demonstrated efficacy with LGBTQ+ and youth and young adults of color. LGBTQ+ and youth and young adults of color who receive affirming, supportive, and culturally responsive services tend to have better behavioral health outcomes and lower recidivism rates than those who do not.<sup>14</sup>

## Girls in the Justice System

While girls in the justice system are underrepresented compared to boys, they account for a substantially larger proportion of petitioned cases for status offenses, such as truancy, running away from home, and curfew violations.<sup>15</sup> Overall, girls represent 15 percent of the total juvenile residential population but represent between 30 to 50 percent of all youth in residential placement for status offenses.<sup>16</sup> Compared to boys, girls in the justice system are more impacted by adverse childhood experiences, trauma, mental health disorders, and involvement in the child welfare system.<sup>17</sup> They are also more likely to have been victims of sex trafficking or sexual exploitation.<sup>18</sup> These factors are critical considerations for reentry planning for girls.<sup>19</sup>

## 4 Involve young adults (and youth, where applicable) in discharge planning, including connections to services beyond behavioral health care.

Addressing individual and family housing needs is essential for person-centered reentry planning.<sup>20</sup> Correctional and juvenile detention facilities, case managers, service intake coordinators, or reentry service providers should assess housing needs and risk of homelessness<sup>21</sup> as early as possible in the reentry and discharge planning process. Corrections, justice system, reentry, and community-based service providers must communicate and collaborate

consistently to assess and respond to the specific identified housing needs of youth and young adults reentering the community. These needs may involve coordination with foster care (including young people who are aging out of foster care<sup>22</sup>), group homes, or courts to accommodate the young person's family reunification goals or child custody considerations, such as visiting schedules. A person-centered reentry plan might also incorporate referrals to educational services so that youth and young adults can re-enroll in school or pursue postsecondary education, such as General Education Development (better known as GED) and the High School Equivalency Test (or HiSET).

## 5 Connect young people to trusted pro-social supports.

Collaborative and comprehensive reentry planning for youth and young adults with behavioral health needs should also involve meaningful, consistent, and ongoing engagement with their parents, caregivers, supportive family members, or foster care providers.

For girls especially, the promotion of healthy, pro-social relationships is especially important given the importance of relationships in their lives.<sup>23</sup>

For youth, this engagement must include reentry plans that prioritize working with youth and families who have experienced incarceration and using trauma-informed and healing practices. A trauma-informed

approach<sup>24</sup> provides youth and their families with the opportunity to rebuild and repair their relationships, which may have been negatively impacted by the youth's incarceration and supports ongoing recovery and crisis prevention.

Youth and young adults with behavioral health needs who have been incarcerated are often stigmatized and prevented from engaging in positive peer and community support opportunities. It is imperative that reentry case planning identifies trusted community members, agencies, and peer support programs that are open to welcoming youth and young adults who

are reentering the community from a correctional facility. Reentry case planning can also include safety planning for youth and young adults who are returning to environments with high levels of criminal, gang, and substance use activity or have histories of intimate partner violence. In service of recidivism reduction<sup>25</sup> and mediation to deescalate gang-based conflict,<sup>26</sup> credible messenger and violence interrupter approaches connect youth and young adults with trusted community members who have similar experiences.

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## **6 Create pathways to employment.**

Referrals to supported employment opportunities can provide youth and young adults with positive experiences that empower them and give them a chance to build prosocial relationships after confinement in a correctional or juvenile facility. However, a report from The Council of State Governments (CSG) Justice Center found that most youth are not prepared to find gainful employment after release and that many juvenile correctional agencies lack the partnerships necessary to assist youth with overcoming barriers to employment in the community.<sup>27</sup> In addition to building referral sources for employment and including supported employment

agencies as noted earlier in this brief, reentry teams should intentionally partner with workforce development agencies, educational entities, and safety net agencies (which provide information on eligibility for social supports such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; Temporary Assistance for Needy Families; Medicaid; Women, Infants, and Children child care vouchers; or Supplemental Security Income). These partnerships are essential to meeting the young person's immediate reentry needs and assisting them with resolving challenges related to obtaining and maintaining employment, which can impact recidivism rates.<sup>28</sup>

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## **Additional Resources**

- Request free support through the [Center for Justice and Mental Health Partnerships](#).
- [Do's and Don'ts for Reducing Recidivism Among Young Adults in the Justice System](#) offers a concrete list of strategies to improve outcomes for young adults in the justice system.
- The [Families](#) page of the CSG Justice Center website provides resources about how to engage families in the reentry process.
- [Improving Police and Mental Health Partnerships for Youth in Crisis](#) is a webinar covering how law enforcement and behavioral health systems can partner to connect youth in crisis to care.
- [Multi-Disciplinary Teams](#): A study on collaboration in the juvenile justice system and challenges facing multi-disciplinary teams working with youth and families.
- [National Guidelines for Child and Youth Behavioral Health Crisis Care](#) provides information about how to develop services that address the needs of youth experiencing a behavioral health crisis.
- [Reentry Starts Here: A Guide for Youth in Long-Term Juvenile Corrections or Treatment Programs](#) is a toolkit to assist youth in preparing for reentry into the community.

## Endnotes

- 1 “Youth Involved with the Juvenile Justice System,” Youth.Gov, accessed January 3, 2024, <https://youth.gov/youth-topics/juvenile-justice/youth-involved-juvenile-justice-system>.
- 2 Crisis refers to “a disruption or breakdown in a person’s or family’s normal or usual pattern of functioning. A crisis cannot be resolved by a person’s customary problem-solving resources/skills. Each crisis situation is unique and will require a flexible approach to the client and situation.” See “Crisis Intervention,” Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, accessed June 14, 2023, <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/esa/social-services-manual/crisis-intervention>. See also, E.A. Mulder, Eddy Brand, and Ruud Bullens, “Risk Factors for Overall Recidivism and Severity of Recidivism in Serious Juvenile Offenders,” *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 55, no. 1 (2010): 118, doi:[10.1177/0306624X09356683](https://doi.org/10.1177/0306624X09356683).
- 3 “Trauma and Abuse of Incarcerated Juveniles in American Prisons,” *Interrogating Justice*, accessed June 14, 2023, [https://interrogatingjustice.org/prisons/trauma-and-abuse-of-incarcerated-juveniles-in-american-prisons/#:~:text=Once%20inside%20the%20system%2C%20research,people%20to%20state%2Dsponsored%20abuse](https://interrogatingjustice.org/prisons/trauma-and-abuse-of-incarcerated-juveniles-in-american-prisons/#:~:text=Once%20inside%20the%20system%2C%20research,people%20to%20state%2Dsponsored%20abuse;); Angela Weis, *Incarcerated Youth & Childhood Trauma* (Chicago: John Howard Association of Illinois, 2011); Nancy Wolff and Jing Shi, “Childhood and Adult Trauma Experiences of Incarcerated Persons and Their Relationship to Adult Behavioral Health Problems and Treatment,” *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 9, no. 5 (2012): 1908, [10.3390/ijerph9051908](https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph9051908); Richard Mendel, *Why Youth Incarceration Fails: An Updated Review of the Evidence* (Washington, DC: The Sentencing Project, 2023), <https://www.sentencingproject.org/reports/why-youth-incarceration-fails-an-updated-review-of-the-evidence/#part-1>; Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, *National Guidelines for Child and Youth Behavioral Health Crisis Care* (Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2022), <https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/pep-22-01-02-001.pdf>.
- 4 “FY 2024 Improving Adult and Youth Crisis Stabilization and Community Reentry Program,” U.S. Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs, accessed September 30, 2024, <https://bja.ojp.gov/funding/opportunities/o-bja-2024-171997>; “Second Chance Act Crisis Stabilization and Community Reentry Program (Fact Sheet),” The Council of State Governments Justice Center, accessed September 30, 2024, <https://bja.ojp.gov/doc/fs-csccr.pdf>.
- 5 The Department of Health and Human Services defines gender-affirming care as a supportive form of health care that “consists of an array of services that may include medical, surgical, mental health, and non-medical services for transgender and nonbinary people.” See Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Office of Population Affairs, *Gender-Affirming Care and Young People* (Washington, DC: HHS Office of Population Affairs, 2022), <https://opa.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/2022-03/gender-affirming-care-young-people-march-2022.pdf>.
- 6 “Girls in the Juvenile Justice System Literature Review: A Product of the Model Programs Guide,” Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, accessed April 19, 2024, <https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/model-programs-guide/literature-reviews/girls-juvenile-justice-system#11-0>.
- 7 “Reentry Starts Here: A Guide for Youth in Long-Term Juvenile Corrections or Treatment Programs,” Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, accessed on April 19, 2024, <https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/library/publications/reentry-starts-here-guide>.
- 8 The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) defines supported employment as “an approach to vocational rehabilitation for people with serious mental illnesses (SMI) that emphasizes helping them obtain competitive work in the community and providing the supports necessary to ensure their success in the workplace. Supported employment programs help people with SMI find jobs that pay competitive wages in integrated settings (such as with other people who don’t necessarily have disabilities) in the community.” See SAMHSA, *Supported Employment: Building Your Program* (Rockville, MD: Center for Mental Health Services, SAMHSA, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2009).
- 9 “Model Programs Guide Literature Review: Juvenile Reentry,” Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, accessed on April 19, 2024, <https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/library/publications/model-programs-guide-literature-review-juvenile-reentry>.
- 10 Daniel Tsai, *Letter to State Health Officials Re: Provision of Medicaid and CHIP Services to Incarcerated Youth* (Maryland: Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, 2024), <https://www.medicaid.gov/federal-policy-guidance/downloads/sho24004.pdf>.
- 11 “Visualizing the Unequal Treatment of LGBTQ People in the Criminal Justice System,” Prison Policy Initiative, accessed July 9, 2023, <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2021/03/02/lgbtq/>; “Racial and Ethnic Disparity in Juvenile Justice Processing,” Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, accessed July 9, 2023, <https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/model-programs-guide/literature-reviews/racial-and-ethnic-disparity#2>; E. Ann Carson, *Prisoners in 2020-Statistical Tables* (Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2021).
- 12 “Black Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) Mental Health Fact Sheet,” Resources to Recover, accessed on July 9, 2023, <https://www.rtor.org/bipoc-mental-health-equity-fact-sheet/>.
- 13 According to the World Health Organization, social determinants of health “are the non-medical factors that influence health outcomes” including but not limited to daily life conditions, income, food insecurity, and housing. See “Social Determinants of Health,” World Health Organization, accessed January 3, 2024, [https://www.who.int/health-topics/social-determinants-of-health#tab=tab\\_1](https://www.who.int/health-topics/social-determinants-of-health#tab=tab_1); “Social Determinants of Health at CDC,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, accessed

January 3, 2024, <https://www.cdc.gov/about/priorities/social-determinants-of-health-at-cdc.html>.

**14** HHS Office of Population Affairs, *Gender-Affirming Care and Young People*; M. Sheppard, L. Hassoun Ayoub, and A. Pecos Melton, *Assessing and Enhancing Cultural Responsiveness in Reentry Programs through Research and Evaluation* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2021).

**15** “Girls in the Juvenile Justice System Literature Review: A Product of the Model Programs Guide,” Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, accessed April 19, 2024, <https://ojjdp.ojp.gov/model-programs-guide/literature-reviews/girls-juvenile-justice-system#11-O>.

**16** Ibid.

**17** Ibid.

**18** Ibid.

**19** Ibid.

**20** Person-centered reentry plans are directed by the client, help them voice their goals for the future, engage them in the decision-making process, and focus on their strengths and preferences.

**21** “Assessing Housing Needs and Risks: A Screening Questionnaire,” CSG Justice Center, accessed June 14, 2023, <https://csgjusticecenter.org/publications/assessing-housing-needs-and-risks-a-screening-questionnaire/>.

**22** “A New Approach to Help Youth Aging Out of Foster Care,” The Foundation for Research on Equal Opportunity, accessed July 18, 2023, <https://freopp.org/whitepapers/a-new-approach-to-help-youth-aging-out-of-foster-care/>.

**23** *Supra*, “Girls in the Juvenile Justice System Literature Review,”

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

**24** SAMHSA defines a trauma-informed approach as “inclusive of trauma-specific interventions, whether assessment, treatment or recovery supports, yet it also incorporates key trauma principles into the organizational culture.” See SAMHSA, *SAMHSA’s Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach* (Rockville, MD: SAMHSA, 2014).

**25** Josh Weber, *Restorative Justice Practices and Credible Messengers: Promising, Innovative Approaches for Improving Outcomes for Youth in the Juvenile Justice System: A Review of Current Research* (CSG Justice Center, 2024), <https://csgjusticecenter.org/publications/restorative-justice-practices-and-credible-messengers-promising-innovative-approaches-for-improving-outcomes-for-youth-in-the-juvenile-justice-system/>.

**26** “Community-Based Violence Interruption Programs Can Reduce Gun Violence,” The Center for American Progress, accessed June 14, 2023, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/community-based-violence-interruption-programs-can-reduce-gun-violence/>.

**27** CSG Justice Center and the National Reentry Resource Center, *On Track: How Well Are States Preparing Youth in the Juvenile Justice System for Employment?* (New York: CSG Justice Center, 2019), <https://csgjusticecenter.org/publications/on-track-how-well-are-states-preparing-youth-in-the-juvenile-justice-system-for-employment/>.

**28** “Court Employment Project,” CASES, accessed July 13, 2023, <https://www.cases.org/programs/court-employment-project/>; “Employment and Recidivism,” EBPSociety, accessed July 13, 2023, <https://www.ebpsociety.org/blog/education/297-employment-recidivism#:~:text=Results%20from%20the%20bivariate%20analyses,15>; “How To Improve Employment Outcomes for Young Adults Leaving Incarceration,” Center for American Progress, accessed July 13, 2023, <https://www.americanprogress.org/article/how-to-improve-employment-outcomes-for-young-adults-leaving-incarceration/>.

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