

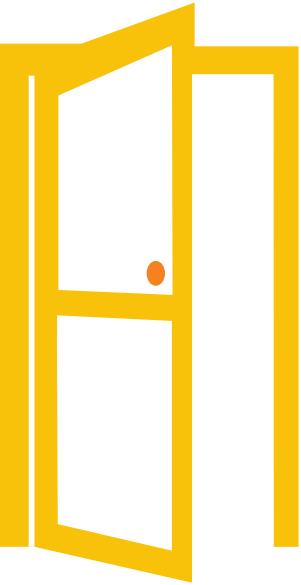
U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
810 Seventh Street NW.
Washington, DC 20531

Caren Harp
Administrator
Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

Office of Justice Programs
Building Solutions • Supporting Communities • Advancing Justice

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
Enhancing Safety • Ensuring Accountability • Empowering Youth

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention is a component of the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Assistance; the Bureau of Justice Statistics; the National Institute of Justice; the Office for Victims of Crime; and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking.



A Guide for Youth in Long-Term Juvenile Corrections and Treatment Programs

Foreword

This toolkit, *Reentry Starts Here: A Guide for Youth in Long-Term Juvenile Corrections and Treatment Programs*, was developed as a resource to help young people in juvenile corrections and treatment programs prepare for reentry and success in the community.

According to OJJDP's Statistical Briefing Book, each year there are more than 48,043 youth in placement on any given day. Each of you will eventually be released back into the community and will have an opportunity to move forward with your lives in a positive direction.

The purpose of this guide is to encourage you to begin thinking and planning for success at the earliest point possible while in placement. As such, the guide is organized into two sections: (1) planning for reentry while in placement and (2) successful reentry into your community.

The resources provided in this guide speak to common barriers that you may experience upon reentry; they include action steps you can take to address those barriers with the help of a caring adult. Each day is an opportunity to take a step in the right direction, and I hope that you find

Acknowledgments

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention would like to thank the following individuals for their contributions to the development of this toolkit. We appreciate your commitment and enthusiasm for improving the lives of youth in the juvenile justice system.

Simon Gousslin, American Institutes
for Research

Nicole Ndumele, U.S. Department of Justice

Nicole Dennis, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

Gwen Dilworth, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

Anna Johnson, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

Linda Rosen, U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

John Hunter, U.S. Department of Labor

Richard Morris, U.S. Department of Labor

Derrick Williams, U.S. Department of Labor

Jasmine Hayes, U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness

Mary Owens, U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness

Rashanna Roach, Vocal A.C.T.I.O.N., LLC

A special thank you to the graphic designer, Mina Bellomy, for her contribution to this project. Also, a special thank you to Kellie Blue and Sanzanna Dean for their vision and coordination of this project.

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REENTRY STARTS HERE

Introduction

Your return to your community, or “reentry,” is a chance for you to make a new start. Your situation is temporary, and you will return to your family and community. From the first days that you are in placement, you should start to think about your release. This booklet, *Reentry Starts Here: A Guide for Youth in Long-Term Juvenile Corrections and Treatment Programs*, was created to help you through this important transition, with assistance from a parent, guardian, mentor, supportive friend, teacher, facility staff, or community agency staff.

The best way to succeed in reentry is to make a plan and do your best to stick to it. This guide is divided into two sections—one to help you prepare for reentry while you are still in placement, and another to help you transition back into your community once you are released. Reentry may be difficult, so it is important for you to seek help from supportive people who have your best interests at heart.



mentor, facility staff, an educator, physical and mental health professionals, housing providers, a lawyer, and other key people in the community.

Work with your **t**eam to **a**ssess your **t**eam's **a**bility to **t**ake on **t**he **a**ssessment.

Your team's job is to help you create a reentry plan and work toward it. The plan starts while you're in placement and may change a few times as you get closer to

who would be the best mentor for you and how to reach out to that person. Ask your reentry coordinator or other facility staff if there is a mentoring program you can access through the facility, or visit www.mentoring.org/get-involved/find-a-mentor to find a mentor in your community.

Communicate with your family

Having regular contact with your family while you're in placement can help you be more successful after your release. Family may include your parents, grandparents, siblings, caregivers, or other supportive adults you trust. Whether you communicate in person, on the phone, or through other technology, your family can be an important source of support. Tell them about your experiences in placement and the challenges you are facing. Discuss your plans for reentry together. Supportive family members or guardians can help you navigate the challenges of transitioning back to your home, including reconnecting to school and understanding and adhering to probation/parole requirements and your aftercare plan.

Connecting to the Support You Need

While you're in placement, you have access to different types of support and services that will help lay the foundation for your health and well-being after your release.

Partner with your counselor or doctor

It's not unusual for young people to feel worried, stressed, or sad. It can be helpful to talk to a counselor or doctor if you are feeling that way a lot. The facility staff should be able to connect you with a counselor or doctor to talk with while you are in placement. You have a right to ask questions about your mental health and let the staff know what you think is best for you. Understanding the type of treatment not un(g t)-8(h)



Part of the plan you make with your reentry team should be to continue building on your successes in treatment and make sure there are no gaps in your counseling at

Planning Ahead for School and Work

You may be able to focus on your education and prepare for employment while you are still in placement.

Continue your education

Work with the teachers at the facility to set education goals. Write down the steps you need to take to obtain a high school diploma, GED, college degree, or other certification. Be sure to attend classes provided at the facility. If you were receiving special education services at your home school, you are entitled to receive those services in your facility. Ask the facility school staff to help you learn more about what kind of student you are, your learning style, and how to succeed when you return to school in the community. They can teach you school success skills such as how to be better organized, how to manage your time, and how to study.

Transfer your academic records

As you get closer to your release, know that your education record from the facility will need to be shared with your local school. You can work with your reentry team to make sure that your education record is transferred. If you should become homeless at any time during your reentry process, federal law requires school districts to allow you to enroll in school immediately so that you can stabilize your education while you and your family search for appropriate housing.

Plan to attend college

If you plan to attend college when you are released, the facility school staff can help you complete applications and financial aid forms. You can receive federal financial aid even if you have a juvenile record. To apply for a federal student loan to help pay for college, you need to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). You may also consider federal Pell Grants, which are available to students who are working toward their first undergraduate or graduate degree, and are based on individual need.



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You don't have to wait until you're released to start thinking about where you'd like to work or to start becoming more qualified for the position you're interested in. With help from facility staff, you can learn job search skills like writing résumés, finding job listings, completing applications, and interviewing. Some long-term juvenile corrections and treatment facilities offer career and technical certification programs. Complete as many certificate programs as you are interested in and able to while you are in placement—it can be expensive to complete them after you are released. With these certificates in hand, you'll have more employment options once you're released.

Understanding the Rules of Community Supervision and Your Aftercare Plan

Before your release, make sure you understand what the juvenile court judge expects of you. When you leave the facility you are in, you will probably have to follow a probation order or parole agreement. The agreement might require you to attend



PART 2: Reentry to Your Community

Whether you are being released after a few months or years in placement, staff members in the facility have created your schedule and told you what to do.



Getting involved in your community

Getting involved in your community is a good way to structure your time, and it can be fun and rewarding. Explore local organizations where you might take classes or volunteer. Programs for youth offer many activities and classes, such as computer gaming, dancing, cooking, sports activities, community outings, arts, music, and certification programs after school, evenings, and weekends. These programs are usually free or available with a scholarship. Examples of organizations to check out are your local Boys and Girls Clubs, the YMCA or YWCA, and churches.

The law requir

Making a List of Important Contacts

Even when you're back in the community, you'll still need help from other people

A large, empty rounded rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write a list of important contacts.



Moving Beyond Your Experience in Placement

There are certain things you can do to move past your time in placement, helping both yourself and others.

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Your juvenile record can affect your future. Your juvenile record can make it harder for you to get a job, go back to or get into school, find a place to live or stay in your current home, join the military, or just move on with your life. Therefore, it is important for you to get your record cleared, if at all possible.

Most states provide an opportunity for people to clear some or all of the following from their juvenile record: police reports, fingerprints, photographs, parole reports, court records, and juvenile detention records. Some states allow you to seal your record, which would hide it from the public. Other states allow you to expunge your



can bring hope to youth in the system and promote a sense of belonging within the community. Talk to your case manager or transition coordinator if you're interested in becoming a peer mentor.

Following Probation, Parole, and Court Requirements

When you're released, be sure to review all of the requirements and conditions of your probation order or parole agreement with someone who can explain the conditions of release. If you have any questions, ask your lawyer or probation or parole officer. You need to know if there are rules about your school attendance or restrictions on where you can go, whom you can interact with, and how late you can stay out. You don't want to violate your probation order or parole agreement just because you didn't understand one of the rules.

Part of your probation order or parole agreement will involve reporting to your

cell or smartphone, mark your appointments on a physical calendar. Get in the habit of putting new appointments on your calendar as you are making them. Missing an appointment with your probation or parole officer could mean that you have to appear before the juvenile court judge again. In some circumstances, the judge may even send you back to placement.

Keeping Up With School and Work

Completing school and getting a good job are two of the best ways to succeed after placement. It is important to try your best and ask for help.

Read this section carefully

You will likely need assistance in the transition back to school, which can be challenging at first. Your local school usually needs a copy of the education records from the facility to give you credit for classes you took while in placement. Also, many schools will not let you reenroll until they have this paperwork. Get help from your lawyer, probation or parole officer, mentor, case manager, or transition coordinator if you have problems getting back into school, scheduling the right classes, or getting credit for the classes you took while in placement. If you are eligible for special education services, you should notify the school staff during your first meeting. The school should refer you to the office for special education services or to a staff person who can help with the enrollment process. Once you are enrolled in school, it's very important to attend all of your classes consistently. Regularly attending class is an important part of being in the community and getting an education, which can eventually help you get a job that pays well.

Remember to read this carefully

Education is the key to getting a good job. Most career paths start with getting either a high school diploma or a GED. If your career goals require further education, you might consider enrolling in a community college, university, or technical school. College is expensive, but with research and planning, there may be resources to cover these costs. You may be eligible for financial aid, including federal Pell Grants, which were introduced on page 5. Visit <https://fafsa.ed.gov> to find more information about



financial aid. Ask your mentor, the high school counselor, or the college financial aid office for help applying for financial aid. Always check into scholarships, grants, and financial aid packages and try your best to avoid taking out high-interest student loans that you have to pay back after you graduate.

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Keep in mind that if your juvenile record has not been sealed or expunged, your record could make it harder for you to get a job. Refer to page 15 for more information about juvenile record sealing or expungement. If you are still in school, think carefully about your job options. It is very difficult to work a full-time job and complete school at the same time. While you are working toward completing your longer term education and career goals, you might consider taking a part-time job. If you are a minor, there may

Managing Your Money

Managing your money wisely ensures that you have a place to live, food to eat, basic clothes to wear, electricity, etc. If you spend too much money on video games, junk food, or expensive and excessive shoes and clothes, you may end up not being able to pay for your rent and groceries. As soon as you start earning income from a job, you will need to think about creating a budget and saving money. Visit www.mymoney.gov/Pages/for-youth.aspx for resources about money that are geared toward youth.

Every day in reentry is a new chance to start again. But the path to success is not a straight line. You will continue to encounter obstacles and setbacks, but that's part of life. The important thing is to return again and again to your goals and the strategies that work for you. Stay focused on your goals, be patient with yourself, and ask for help when you need it.

Three questions to answer after your release

1. Have you gathered your important documents together in a folder?

Check off the documents you have in a folder, and write down how you'll go about getting any documents that you didn't check off.

State-issued driver's license or

School records (see pages 5 and 17 of Reentry Starts Here for details on transitioning back to your school in the community)

List of important contacts (see page 13 of Reentry Starts Here for more information)

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