

# ENGAGING SCHOOLS IN THE JUVENILE DRUG COURT: PROMISING STRATEGIES FROM THE FIELD

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# Engaging schools in the juvenile drug court: Promising strategies from the field

Few factors impact a young person's future well-being more than education. Over their lifetimes, youth who complete high school will earn 50% to 100% more than those who drop out; and while the U.S. job market overall is showing signs of improvement, high school dropouts are falling further behind. Currently, fewer than 40% of the 25 million Americans over age 25 who lack a high school diploma are employed. Youth who drop out are also far more likely to become involved in the criminal justice system. On any given day, about one in every 10 young male high school dropouts is in jail or juvenile detention, compared with one in 35 young male high school graduates.

Recognizing the critical role of school in the lives of youth, juvenile drug courts (JDC) since their inception have emphasized education as a key component of a comprehensive, multidisciplinary approach to serving the youth under their jurisdiction. The seminal 2003 publication, *Juvenile Drug Courts: Strategies in Practice*, notes that “Unless a juvenile drug court participant successfully engages in an educational program, he or she will not be adequately prepared for life after the drug court or for adulthood.” Of the 16 strategies presented in this publication, #13 is entirely devoted to school linkages, urging courts to “Coordinate with the school system to ensure that each participant enrolls in and attends an educational program that is appropriate to his or her needs.”

Despite this long-standing emphasis on education, many juvenile drug courts have struggled to create the court-school partnerships that would enable them to more effectively address the educational needs of youth. In surveys of JDC staff over the years, “How to engage with schools” has consistently ranked among the top five areas identified for needed training and technical assistance. Yet, it has been difficult to identify resources for responding to these requests. Organizers of national JDC conferences, for example, report that they run into difficulty when they attempt to find presenters who can speak to school partnerships.

As an initial step toward filling that knowledge gap, the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ) surveyed the research literature on court/school collaborations, culling out findings relevant to the work of juvenile drug courts. With this information as a backdrop, the NCJFCJ then set out to gather the experiences and insights of JDC practitioners across the country who have worked to partner with schools. Over the past several months, more than 40 practitioners – representing a variety of roles within the JDC – have responded to online surveys or have joined focus groups. In this brief, we have distilled their contributions into a set of “promising strategies” in the hope that others will apply and build on what they've learned. We offer these strategies, not as conclusive recommendations or principles, but rather as a stepping-stone to further learning and growth in the field.

# Schools and JDCs: A mutually beneficial relationship

The potential benefits of school/JDC partnerships are readily apparent. Ultimately, JDCs and schools share a common goal: to ensure that the youth in their charge become responsible, self-sufficient adults who will be assets to their communities. In the shorter term, students' academic performance and in-school behavior are likely to improve when they are no longer abusing alcohol or other drugs, and while they're receiving the individualized supports and supervision of the JDC. At the same time, youth enrolled in the drug court will be more likely to succeed in the program if they are attending school regularly, taking advantage of services offered by the schools, and experiencing academic success.

## Barriers to Collaboration: The differing perspectives of JDCs and schools

Despite these multiple, overlapping goals, nearly all the JDC team members who participated in the survey and/or focus groups had encountered challenges in attempting to partner with schools. In many respects, this is not surprising. In their day-to-day work, schools and drug courts take on different roles with respect to drug court youth, and so are likely to regard them through different lenses. Given these contrasting perspectives, it's often easy to lose sight of the larger, common goals for youth. For example:

- The JDC is likely to be supervising a small number of youth attending a particular school, so the entire focus of the drug court team is on those youth. But for the school, these students are just a handful among the hundreds or thousands they're responsible for each day. So while the JDC can devote considerable resources to supporting just a few youth, the school has to balance the time and attention given to drug court youth against the needs of all the students attending the school. From the perspective of the court, it may seem perfectly reasonable to ask that the school or district designate an educator to be "at the table," attending weekly meetings as part of the drug court team. But from the perspective of the school or district, devoting this much time to a just a few students might be hard to justify, especially in an era of staff cutbacks and shrinking resources. It's not surprising, then, that the court might experience the school as unresponsive, while to the school, the court might seem overly demanding.
- Most members of a juvenile drug court team work only with youth who are troubled and challenging. But teachers and administrators encounter a broad population of youth. In comparison to the majority of students, troubled youth may seem less receptive to education and less rewarding to teach. Learning that a youth is participating in the drug court may only confirm this perception of the youth as a "problem." From the standpoint of the JDC team, however, it might seem as though JDC youth are being stigmatized by teachers and administrators.
- Teachers and administrators need to maintain a classroom and school environment that enables all students to participate and learn. If a student becomes disruptive, they see it as their responsibility to protect the learning environment, so that suspension or even expulsion is seen as a reasonable step to take. But to the JDC team, who advocate for drug court youth and want to keep youth in school, it may appear that the school has "given up on our kids."

Beyond these differences in perspective, JDCs encounter logistical problems that arise when dealing with very large districts comprising many schools, each with its own institutional culture and procedures. Multiple districts also present a challenge. Nearly half of our survey respondents reported that their JDCs encompassed five or more school districts; only six survey respondents (of the total 34) dealt with just a single district. One respondent cautioned JDCs attempting to work with multiple districts to "be prepared for lots of variation among districts."

# Promising Strategies

Even with the many challenges to partnerships between JDCs and schools, most JDCs we surveyed were able to describe some success in finding ways to mitigate them. In fact, when asked to name “the single most pressing challenge your JDC experiences in working with schools,” two respondents reported: “Nothing. We have a good working relationship and collaborate well,” and “No challenges... [our] partnership is working well.”

The comments gathered from survey respondents and focus-group participants – their success stories, insights, and recommendations – can be grouped under five major strategies that show promise of fostering effective partnerships with schools.

## *Strategies for Building Successful Partnerships between the JDC and Schools*

- *Make educational goals a priority – for the JDC, and for each youth.*
- *Re-define “at the table.”*
- *If the schools can’t (or won’t) come to you, go to the schools.*
- *Educate parents to supervise and advocate for their child’s education.*
- *Find the right educational “fit” for each youth.*

As we distilled these strategies, a common, underlying theme emerged: To work successfully with schools, JDC practitioners will need to shift the emphasis from what schools can do to assist the court, to focus instead on what the court can do to help the schools – in particular, how can the influence and power of the court be used to help schools engage families, work more effectively with youth, and obtain resources for youth. This represents a fundamental change from the traditional stance of the judicial system. Because courts represent the force of law, they are more accustomed to making demands of other institutions and getting a timely response. In effect, as juvenile drug court practitioners, we must “turn our thinking upside down.”

- *Make educational goals a priority – for the JDC, and for each youth.*

A useful starting point for using the influence of the court to support the schools is simply to make education a priority in the work of the JDC.

Given the many aspects of a youth’s life that a court supervises – their drug use, progress in treatment, criminal behavior, family relationships, and peer influences – it can be difficult to maintain a focus also on how each youth is doing in school, particularly if team members have been unable to gain the cooperation of teachers and administrators. So it’s important to keep in mind that a youth’s experience in school is every bit as important as his or her drug use or criminal behavior. In the words of a focus group participant, “No school-related issue is unimportant.”

One of the questions posed in our survey was: “What is the single best thing your JDC is doing to collaborate with schools or implement an educational component in your JDC?” In response, most JDC practitioners pointed to their efforts to make education a priority – by closely tracking school attendance, homework, grades, and in-school behavior, and then holding youth accountable.

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Tracking methods varied from court to court. Some courts contacted school personnel to gather information; others required the youth to gather the information directly from teachers. Some courts asked for reports on a weekly or bi-monthly schedule; others tracked day-by-day.

In some school systems, information about students' attendance and grades is posted online where parents can access it using an individualized code assigned to them by the school. Courts can take advantage of these systems by requesting that parents share their codes. Tapping into these online systems has several advantages: JDC youth avoid the stigma of carrying a daily report form that each teacher must sign; teachers no longer have to respond to requests for routine information from the JDC; and the JDC can access up-to-date information about each youth whenever it's needed for team meetings and hearings.

- *Re-define “at the table.”*

To effectively supervise a youth's educational progress, the JDC needs regular, up-to-date information. In the original JDC model, this required having a school representative literally “at the table” as a member of the team, responsible for tracking down information about each youth and reporting to the team during regularly scheduled meetings. In theory, this is still the “gold standard,” widely aspired to by practitioners in the field. When asked to what extent they agreed with the statement “I think having an educational representative on our team is critical to the success of the clients of our JDC,” more than two-thirds of our survey respondents either agreed or, more often, strongly agreed. Our online focus group participants felt even more strongly. When presented with the statement “In order for participants to be successful in school, JDC programs need schools to be at the table,” not a single respondent disagreed.

For some courts, working with some schools, the model has worked well. But more often, courts have found that educators simply don't have the time and resources to join the JDC team and attend weekly meetings. Consequently, the educator's seat at the JDC table is likely to be left empty. Leaving the seat empty is simply not an option, however, because education is so central to a youth's success in the JDC program and in life beyond the program. Also, for a vast majority of JDC participants, school accounts for almost half their weekday activities.

Fortunately, some courts have found ways to engage schools even when it wasn't possible to get a teacher or other school representative physically at the table. The key to their success is to broaden the definition of “at the table” to mean instead “part of the process.” In this way, the court's objective shifts to establishing reliable lines of communication with educators, so that having someone at the table becomes just one possible means of accomplishing that objective. This flexibility in thinking enables JDCs to move ahead in identifying the key people who are able and willing to support JDC youth – even if they can't attend meetings

*“If they're in trouble at school, they're also in trouble with drug court. But if they're doing well, they're applauded for it.”*

*“Our clients fill out daily homework sheets and weekly progress reports, which give us direct communication with the teachers, and we email with them daily as well.”*

## Promising Strategies

regularly – and then investing the time and effort in building relationships with them. In fact, sometimes you have to do that before you can get someone to the table.

Another key to establishing successful communication with schools is not to assume that “one size fits all,” but rather to anticipate that what works in one school or district may not succeed in another. This is evident in the experience of a focus group participant who recounted: “I work with two districts...In one I have excellent rapport with counselors and the principal and they keep me informed. I can’t ask for anything more.... But the other school is hands-off...” This variation among schools means that you’ll need to be prepared to tailor your approach to each school, and to expect that some schools will require more time and effort than others. In the end, the partnerships that evolve may turn out to look completely different depending on the particular district and school.

If they cannot get someone from the school district to participate on their team, some courts have found success with identifying individuals who know how to navigate the school system. Options could include involving a former/retired educator, hiring former teachers as educational outreach officers for court positions, identifying and inviting staff from local community/non-profit groups with an education focus and knowledge of the school system, asking a probation officer who has history of success of building relationships with schools to help staff specific cases, etc.

Even if you’re unable to establish reliable communication with teachers and administrators at a particular school, there may be other ways to stay abreast of how drug court youth are performing. Following on the example of the online reporting system mentioned earlier, you might research the school’s existing systems for gathering information about students, communicating with parents, and finding services for youth who need additional support. Then you can try to build on those systems by exploring how the court might tap into them.

For some schools and districts, building relationships may take more time. To focus your efforts, it might help to do some research by querying other youth-service agencies in the community about their experience in working with the school and district. Learning about the school’s challenges and limitations might give you some insight into the difficulty you’re encountering. And, if you can identify any strong community partnerships the school has participated in, you can explore how to build on that success.

In the end, it may be the drug court youth themselves who become your best ambassadors to the schools. When asked in our survey “In your opinion, what is one way to build strong connections between the JDC and schools?” one respondent reflected that “Our kids’ improved behavior over time usually does the most...” Once teachers and administrators witness the changes in youth brought about by participation in the JDC, they may be motivated to join the team or become involved in other ways.

*“Our experience is that we need a relationship with a particular person to keep kids in schools. They don’t need to be physically at our table, but the communication needs to be there.”*

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- *If the schools can't (or won't) come to you, go to the schools.*

Some courts have found that they can work more effectively with schools by showing up on site. This can take many forms. In some cases, courts have scheduled hearings and family meetings on school grounds to make it easier for teachers, counselors, and administrators to participate. Others have found it useful to schedule a presentation for school personnel to orient them to the philosophy and operation of the JDC, emphasizing how the JDC can help the school succeed with students who are frequently truant, present behavior problems, and struggle academically in part because of their involvement with alcohol and other drugs.

Presentations can go beyond orientation to offer background on topics and issues relevant to working with troubled youth. For example, one court offered a session to educate teachers and counselors about the adolescent brain and addiction. Sometimes courts have invited school personnel to join the JDC team in attending a statewide or national drug court conference or juvenile drug court training.

However, if you decide to schedule hearings or meetings at a school, or even if team members (such as probation officers) pay frequent visits to the school, be aware of the impact this activity might have on students involved in the JDC. If your presence becomes widely known, it could reinforce the stigmatizing of drug court youth. In this respect, JDCs might take cues from what happened when police were placed on school campuses. While well-intended – it was thought that this intervention would help to build positive relationships between police and youth – research has found that in practice, the presence of “School Resource Officers” has resulted in the criminalization of youth behavior, an increase in referrals to the juvenile justice system for minor offenses, and more youth suspended and expelled from school.

Another way the court can have a presence in the schools is to arrange for drug-court youth to do their required community service at their school. This has multiple advantages – for youth, the school, and the court. Beyond providing a service to the school, it fosters the youth’s connection to the school, allowing them to contribute to the school community in positive ways. And, as teachers and administrators observe youth making positive contributions, it helps to cut through the stigma of participation in the drug court.

- *Educate parents to supervise and advocate for their child’s education.*

Carrying out the strategies above can absorb a great deal of the court’s time –tracking each youth’s progress in school, advocating for them with school authorities, and building the relationships that will make all this possible.

Fortunately, the court doesn’t have to do it all. Parents, an often-untapped resource, can take on much of this workload, provided they have the knowledge and skills necessary to supervise and advocate for their child at school. By educating parents, the court can transition its educational role to the parent. In fact, even if the court had all the resources it needed to

*“I think it’s a process at every school and district. It takes time to build those relationships.... We step forward, they step forward, and we meet in the middle to work on what’s best for youth.... So it’s a process and we have to keep engaging schools and the district.”*

*“We don’t have anyone who comes to our weekly staffing, but we do have some good relationships. It depends on who the person is – certain counselors or special education teachers that we can call. And our probation officer has formed relationships and that has worked to our benefit...”*

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supervise each youth's educational progress, it would still make sense to invest in educating parents who will then be equipped to continue in this role long after the youth has left the court's supervision. Parents will also be able to apply their skills and knowledge to other children in the family not enrolled in the JDC.

There are several areas of knowledge and skills that parents will need before they'll be prepared to take on this role. At the most basic level, the court will need to assess each parent's values and attitudes toward education. Not all parents believe that it's important for their child to stay in school and graduate. Before you can enlist them in supporting their child's education, they'll need to become aware of the impact that graduating from high school will make in their child's life – the doors it will open both to better paying work and to opportunities for further education. As a first step toward preparing parents for this role, the court needs to explore and understand each parent's perspective on education, without automatically assuming that the parent's goals for their child are aligned with the goals of the court.

However, even parents who value education may hold back from advocating for their child because they're intimidated by a large, complex school bureaucracy – especially when the parent is new to U.S. culture and speaks a first language other than English. By teaching parents how the system works and how to navigate through its complexities, the court can empower them to become more involved in their child's education. For example, parents can benefit by learning how the school's disciplinary system works, what special education is, how to request an "Individual Education Plan," and what resources are available for Non-English speakers.

The JDC team can also model how to communicate effectively with the school and then coach parents as they begin to contact the school on their own. With this knowledge and support, parents are likely to feel more confident about approaching teachers and administrators with their concerns.

Finally, many parents will benefit by learning how to provide structure for their child – for example, how to work with their child to set goals for school work, schedule homework time, and seek out help if the child is struggling in a subject. To reinforce the family's connection to the school, the court can also encourage the parent to accompany their child to school events. Some courts build all these activities into the contract signed by the parent and youth when they embark on the JDC program. For example, the contract might make it mandatory for parents to check regularly on their child's grades.

For some parents, this learning will also need to incorporate general parenting skills – how to set expectations, enforce rules, and hold their child accountable, while still providing encouragement and support. As a judge described it: "We see it important to educate these parents that they can actually do the parenting. For example, you can demand that a smart child get better than C grades. You can set your own curfew and it can be stricter

*"We haven't had success in getting them to our table, but we go to theirs."*

*"Recently we had an incident with a charter school that wanted to kick a child out. Someone from the drug court team went to the school... [The school] learned more about the drug court and will be more willing to work with us now."*

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than ours. You can figure out your own discipline. We teach parents that they can take cell phones away and limit game playing. We pat them on the back for being the parent and not just leaving it to the court.” In effect, the court reassures the parent: If you hold your child accountable, we’ve “got your back.”

There are a variety of settings in which courts can teach parents how to supervise and advocate for their child’s education. Many JDCs hold regular support group meetings for parents, and these are a good place to address education topics. Other courts schedule family team meetings at the school so that the youth’s guidance counselor and teachers can attend, and this also provides an opportunity for the parent to learn about the school and build relationships with the people central to their child’s school life. Another option is to work through the treatment providers who can use time during their sessions with parents and youth to help them negotiate homework issues.

Whatever form this instruction takes, it’s essential for the JDC team to acknowledge parents’ efforts as they take on the role of education advocate for their child. Some courts formalize their recognition of parents by using incentives – for example, by making an award to a “Support Person of the Month.” This award is given to a parent who has made a determined effort to supervise his or her child’s progress in school or to advocate with the school on the child’s behalf.

- *Find the right educational “fit” for each youth.*

Even with the best of supports, some youth will not be able to succeed in a regular public school. And, if they remain in the same school, they may be at risk of being labeled as a failure and a troublemaker. Although you don’t want to give up too quickly, it’s important to make this assessment as soon as possible so that you can find another setting where the youth can move forward with his education. For some students, an alternative school might be a better fit. (Everyone who responded to our survey reported that their district has an alternative high school.)

### VOCATIONAL EDUCATION

Another common option is vocational education. However, it’s critical that the skills being taught will actually boost the student’s employability in the current labor market and not lead to a dead end. It’s also critical that the vocational program fit with the student’s interests. One court connects vocational education to their strengths-based focus: “If they like to tinker with cars or computers, we build on that and direct them to community assets. We take steps also to help them develop interests if they don’t have any, through community service. Sometimes you have to push them away from computer games. We try to get them going in some direction.”

### COMMUNITY COLLEGES

Another resource the court can draw on to help youth pursue their interests is local community colleges. One court encourages students to continue their education even if they already have a GED: “We were able to get some funding to help one girl get nursing training, and another into decorating school.... We’ve helped them get in, helped them research classes. We walk them through it but we don’t do it for them.”

Another JDC collaborates with the local community college on a “career day” attended by drug court youth. “We look at what their interests are and direct them [to classes that are a good fit].... We try every way we can to get them involved in something that interests them.”

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If you do reach out to community colleges on behalf of youth who are 18 or older, be aware that you may need to make special arrangements to get feedback on the student's performance. Some JDCs have found that community colleges are reluctant to disclose grades and other information about students who are no longer minors.

### RECOVERY HIGH SCHOOLS

In recent years, several metropolitan areas have experimented with “recovery high schools,” sometimes called “sobriety schools.” These are schools designed for students with a history of substance abuse who have made a commitment to recovery. They provide an environment free from the culture of alcohol and other drugs. Although these schools are frequently embedded in or affiliated with another traditional or alternative school, a separation is maintained between recovery students and others through scheduling and physical barriers. Research on these schools has documented a “significant reduction in substance use as well as in mental health symptoms among the students.”

If a JDC consistently serves many students from the same district, the court might want to consider exploring with school administrators the possibility of starting a recovery high school. Further information can be found at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19165348>.

### TUTORING AND OTHER EDUCATIONAL SUPPORTS

Beyond holding youth accountable for school attendance and grades, many JDCs mentioned the educational supports they provide as “the single best thing your JDC is doing to collaborate with schools.” These supports included tutoring, helping youth who have dropped out to get back into school, and connecting youth to services to support their Individual Education Plans. One JDC has partnered with a local college to provide an in-house tutoring program.

To the extent that the court can motivate students, keep them in school, and help them perform to their potential, teachers and administrators are likely to develop more positive feelings toward youth enrolled in the JDC and toward the program overall. That, in turn, will lessen the stigma so often attached to participation in a drug court, and make it easier to engage schools in the JDC.

- *Other Consideration*

### TRUANCY: AN EARLY INDICATOR OF PROBLEMS AT SCHOOL

Although tracking school attendance might seem to be a rudimentary court activity, it can be a highly effective intervention. This is because truancy is known to be an early warning signal of drug use, criminal activity, and other problems in a child's life. To address these problems at a very early stage, many communities have designed truancy-reduction programs that involve schools, law enforcement, families, businesses, judicial and social service agencies, and community and youth service organizations. The experience of these programs has shown that good results can be achieved through approaches that involve parents and hold them responsible for their child's school attendance, and that also provide intensive monitoring, counseling, and other family-strengthening services. Because JDCs incorporate these same approaches, they are in an ideal position to intervene effectively with youth who are missing school.

In particular, JDCs are equipped to go beyond the statistics of days missed to look into the reasons for a youth's truancy. Research has found a wide range of causes for truancy beyond simply not wanting to sit in classes. For example, parents who

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place little value on education may keep children at home to work or babysit preschool siblings; youth who walk to school might stay home to avoid passing through dangerous neighborhoods; immigrant youth might fear other students. One researcher found that one in five African American and Hispanic teens had stayed home or cut class because they feared crime or threats of crime at school.

Because school personnel may not have time to sleuth out and address the unique causes for a student's truancy, this is an area where the JDC can make an important contribution. If it comes to light that a student has begun to miss particular classes or entire school days, the JDC team can intervene quickly – during family meetings, hearings, and treatment sessions – to pinpoint the reasons. For example, is the youth having difficulty with a particular class or teacher? Or, is it an issue with the school in general? Are there factors outside of school – such as lack of transportation, fear of crime, or family responsibilities – that might be keeping the youth from attending?

Based on this information, the team can then work with the youth and family to devise a plan that goes beyond sanctions to address the underlying causes of the truancy. The plan might incorporate a meeting between the youth and a teacher, perhaps facilitated by a member of the JDC team; arrangements for tutoring or other help; educating parents about why school should be a priority in their child's life; a re-evaluation of whether the school attended is the best fit; or a range of other interventions tailored to the youth's unique situation.

In a similar way, the court can identify and respond quickly to other changes in a youth's performance at school – declining grades, failure to turn in homework, and disruptive behavior – before the problem escalates. In addition to benefiting the drug-court participant, timely intervention by the JDC has another benefit for the school district: By keeping students in school, the court helps the district avoid the loss of revenue from payments made by the state for each day a youth is present.

It is important to note that the additional scrutiny of the court is a double-edged sword. Although it does allow the court and the school to intervene early when a young person's attendance and/or grades begin to decline, it is equally important to intervene in a way that is supportive rather than punitive. Just by participating in a JDC a youth is “put under the microscope,” and behaviors that would normally be considered status offenses are instead met with stiff penalties. With that in mind, JDCs should consider using a sanction of the appropriate intensity for infractions like truancy – for example, an early curfew rather than a day in detention.

- *Conclusion*

In the end, the most important reason for juvenile drug courts and schools to collaborate is because they have the same goal – healthy young people who are able to meaningfully engage in their own education. Meaningful linkages with education can take a variety of forms, and if juvenile drug courts make education a priority for their youth, they must also make it a priority for team. While the road to partnerships with schools may be long, in the end, it is one of the most rewarding community linkages a juvenile drug court can create.

# JDCs and Schools: A “Win-Win” Relationship

<p>Juvenile drug courts and schools share the ultimate goal of helping youth to become responsible, self-sufficient adults. Each can help the other work toward this goal.</p>	
<p><b>What JDCs can offer schools</b></p>	<p><b>What schools can offer JDCs</b></p>
<p>Close supervision of troubled youth whose behavior often poses challenges to schools</p>	<p>Education essential to increase youth prospects for future employment</p>
<p>Truancy prevention: Tracking attendance of youth who tend to have frequent absences. (Also prevents loss of revenue for schools receiving state funding based on number of days students are present)</p>	<p>Guidance based on educational assessments (e.g. special needs)</p>
<p>Supervision of homework: Making certain that youth are held accountable for completing and turning in assignments</p>	<p>Regular feedback from teachers about youth enrolled in the JDC to help the court provide more immediate and effective intervention</p>
<p>Use of incentives and sanctions to encourage positive behavior at school</p>	<p>Sports and other activities that help youth develop their interests and occupy their time after school</p>
<p>Student time devoted to school administration and maintenance (as part of court-mandated community service)</p>	<p>Opportunities for community service</p>
<p>Help to keep youth in school by intervening before suspension or expulsion becomes necessary (also prevents loss of revenue to schools)</p>	<p>Room space for treatment providers so that youth don't have to travel to another site for court-mandated sessions</p>
<p>Engagement of parents in the child's education by teaching parents how to supervise homework and navigate the school system to access resources for their child</p>	<p>Tutoring, educational assessments, and other services offered to youth who are struggling academically</p>
<p>Assessment of students who have difficulty in traditional classrooms to identify a better educational “fit”</p>	<p>Alternatives to the traditional classroom: alternative schools, special education, and vocational education</p>
<p>Treatment for abuse of alcohol and other drugs</p>	<p>Participation in planning the JDC</p>
<p>Orientation for teachers and administrators to the philosophy and operation of the JDC</p>	<p>Orientation for JDC staff to the programs and services offered by the school district</p>
<p>Educational sessions for teachers and administrators on topics relevant to troubled youth, for example “the adolescent brain and addiction”</p>	<p>Invitation to attend in-service teacher training</p>
<p>Able to delve into the reasons for youth truancy, poor grades, and disruptive behavior in order to determine the most effective intervention</p>	
<p>Psychological assessments and mental health services for the youth that can be ordered by the court</p>	
<p>The time and expertise of team members who can be contacted by the school for assistance in dealing with drug court youth</p>	

# Overcoming Barriers: Strategies for Successful JDC/School Partnerships

The chart below summarizes the collective wisdom of JDC practitioners who have built partnerships with schools.	
Issues	Strategies
Stigma, labeling of drug court youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In communications with educators, highlight youths' areas of strength as well as their challenges.</li> <li>• Acknowledge that, compared to other students; youth enrolled in the drug court may make more demands on teachers and administrators.</li> <li>• Find out whether the school uses an online reporting system for parents. If so, request access to passwords so that drug court youth do not have to carry a daily report form for gathering teacher signatures after each class.</li> </ul>
Suspension and expulsion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledge that teachers and administrators are responsible for maintaining a classroom and school climate conducive to the learning of all students.</li> <li>• Offer additional supervision and supports for drug court youth facing school disciplinary action, so that they can remain in school without disrupting other students (e.g., in-school suspension).</li> <li>• Work with district committees to re-examine "zero tolerance," the use of School Resource Officers, and other policies that contribute to suspension and expulsion of youth.</li> </ul>
Limited understanding of the JDC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct orientation sessions at the school site to explain drug court philosophy and procedures, highlighting how the JDC can help the school with youth who are participating in the court.</li> <li>• Invite an educator to participate on the planning team or serve on an advisory board.</li> <li>• Invite educators to join the JDC team at state and national trainings and conferences.</li> </ul>
Educators' limited time and resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hold team and family meetings at the school to make it easier for teachers and counselors to participate.</li> <li>• Minimize requests for information by tapping into the school's existing systems for tracking attendance and reporting on student progress.</li> <li>• Teach parents how to provide a structure for homework (as a means of supporting teachers).</li> </ul>
Lack of response from schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acknowledge that schools are dealing with hundreds or thousands of youth.</li> <li>• Be flexible in engaging teachers and other school personnel by focusing on developing individual relationships, rather than expecting a representative to be physically "at the table."</li> </ul>
Large districts; multiple schools and districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anticipate that "one size will not fit all."</li> <li>• Tailor outreach to particular schools and districts.</li> </ul>

# End Notes

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