Why Promote Community-Based Alternatives to Secure Confinement

Most youth who come to the attention of the juvenile justice system should be diverted. The goal of the juvenile justice system should be to intervene only as much as necessary, so only use service, supervision, or placement for those youth that need it and make sure to only refer them to services that are necessary for positive behavior change.

- Despite declining rates of youth held in secure confinement, a large number of non-violent youth who are not chronic or serious offenders, remain in secure confinement. This includes status offenders and those detained only for a violation of a court order.
- According to research, the confinement of youth does not prevent further recidivism and may actually cause significant harm.
- There is significant evidence of widespread and growing maltreatment of youth in state-funded juvenile corrections facilities including sexual victimization, physical abuse, coercive use of force, and over reliance on disciplinary isolation.
- African-American, Hispanic and American Indian youth are far more likely than their white counterparts to be placed in secure confinement, even after controlling for the seriousness of an offense, offending history and other factors.
- There is public support for effective and rehabilitative community-based services for youth.
- Dispositional alternatives, especially community-based and family-centered programs, have proven to be successful for young people who have serious problems. These programs meet the needs of justice-involved youth and should be greatly expanded.
- States should limit placement of youth to secure confinement to only those who have committed serious offenses and who pose clear, demonstrable risks to public safety.
- Public safety is better served when youth learn and practice new skills in their home, neighborhood, and community environment, rather than in secure confinement settings.

Possible Outcomes

- **PROMOTE PERSONAL GROWTH** and positive behavior changes for justice-involved youth.
- **REDUCE TRAUMA** to youth that results from confinement and institutionalization.
- **REDUCE THE POSSIBILITY FOR A YOUTH TO RETURN** to the justice system for a new offense.
- **REDUCE COST** by using funds to invest in community alternatives and programs rather than in secure confinement that is more expensive and less effective.
- **MAKE PROGRESS IN ACHIEVING RACE EQUITY** for youth in the justice system.
Which Youth Should Be Considered for Community-Based Alternatives to Secure Confinement?

Provide structured supervision for youth during peak crime hours.

The court, system partners, and community partners can work with individuals with lived experience to give youth a support in their communities as role models who understand outcomes of their struggles and barriers and how to modify their behavior to achieve their goals and potential.

Youth who have committed serious offenses or have serious offense histories and would otherwise be referred for juvenile facilities should be considered eligible for programs that are community-based and family-centered because these programs address their needs and are effective at preventing long-term behavior change.

JUDGES EXERCISING LEADERSHIP Judicial officers can use their statutory and inherent judicial powers to lead collaborative partnerships that seek to identify and explore new options as alternatives to secure confinement.

How Do You Implement Community-Based Alternatives to Secure Confinement?

The court, system partners, and community partners can work with community partners to identify innovative tools, equity training, for all collaborative partners.

JUDICIAL LEADERSHIP Judicial leaders can help redirect system reforms that reduce youth involvement in the justice system and reduce incarceration.

Youth can remain at home and in their community with intensive supervision to promote positive behavior change.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE Youth who have committed serious offenses or have serious offense histories and would otherwise be referred for juvenile facilities should be considered eligible for programs that are community-based and family-centered because these programs address their needs and are effective at preventing long-term behavior change.

EQUITY TRAINING Judicial leaders and collaborative partners should make sure that all communities have programs that are community-based, family-centered, and restorative in nature that prioritize restorative justice practices for engaging victim, crime victims, and the community as role models who demonstrate to youth that they have experience with similar family needs and help youth learn from their mistakes and to foster prosocial connections and activities.

MENTORING/CR CREDIBLE MESSNGERS The court, system partners, and collaborative partners can work with community partners to identify innovative tools and, in cross-systems and community-level collaborations that seek to identify and explore new options as alternatives to secure confinement.

The court, system partners, and community partners can adopt a culture that prioritizes restorative justice practices for engaging victim, crime victims, and the community as role models who demonstrate to youth that they have experience with similar family needs and help youth learn from their mistakes and to foster prosocial connections and activities.

The court, system partners, and community partners can adopt a culture that prioritizes restorative justice practices for engaging victim, crime victims, and the community as role models who demonstrate to youth that they have experience with similar family needs and help youth learn from their mistakes and to foster prosocial connections and activities.

MENTORING/CR CREDIBLE MESSNGERS The court, system partners, and collaborative partners can work with community partners to identify innovative tools and, in cross-systems and community-level collaborations that seek to identify and explore new options as alternatives to secure confinement.