



# Youth Justice

## Implement a re-entry pilot program with wrap-around services focused on family engagement.

### WHY

The transition back home after youth have been in custody can be challenging if youth have not had significant time and support to plan and engage with the process.

Many times, they might be returning to peers who have moved on to the next stage of life, whether that be additional educational opportunities or participating in the workforce. Ensuring that youth have a plan of where they will fit in is critical to a successful transition and reducing recidivism.

Engaging family in the therapeutic treatment process throughout detention is critical to a successful youth justice system, but it becomes even more imperative as the youth is planning on returning home to loved ones.

In a multi-state survey of caregivers with children in the justice system, 86 percent said they would like to be more involved in their child's treatment while they are in custody.<sup>4</sup> More than half of family members said that it was difficult or impossible to get information about their child's progress and/or safety.<sup>4</sup>

**Seeing families as partners and a critical component for the treatment and transition process will lead to more successful outcomes.**

**In a survey of 9 states and 20 cities, 32 percent of parents and families surveyed reported discussing release plans with juvenile justice system personnel prior to their child's release.<sup>4</sup>**

**In that same survey, the most commonly recommended proposal for how to support families with youth in the justice system was notifying families of expected release dates to allow them sufficient time to prepare.<sup>4</sup>**

**A pilot program in Georgia has a successful re-entry planning model:<sup>5</sup>**

**It starts with developing a reentry plan within 60 days of the youth's detention. A multidisciplinary team—which includes a reentry specialist, juvenile detention counselor, community case manager, and mental health counselor—meets with the youth and family. As the release date nears, the team meets monthly, joined by a reentry resource coordinator who connects the family with local service providers and an education specialist who helps facilitate a return to high school or enrollment in postsecondary school or technical college.**

**Factors that contribute to the project's success include an emphasis on family engagement. Monthly "family chats" address topics such as financial literacy, nutrition, and substance use, and a 10-week course emphasizes ways to strengthen family communications.**