

Providing Effective Facility- Based Programs and Services

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Foundation for an Effective Youth Facility

Programs, services, and approaches must stem from an overarching **therapeutic** philosophy—i.e., one that facilitates and supports **youth development** through skill-building and connections to pro-social adults and peers.

Research on Effective Juvenile Justice Programs

Prof. Mark Lipsey's meta-analysis on juvenile justice programs:

- Analyzed 548 studies on delinquency interventions to determine what works to reduce recidivism
- **Key finding**: Programs with a therapeutic philosophy were much more effective at reducing recidivism than those steeped in programs featuring punishment, surveillance, fear and control.

See: Lipsey, M., et al. (2010). *Improving the Effectiveness of Juvenile Justice Programs: A New Perspective on Evidence-Based Programs*

Advancing Youth Development at the Facility

Facility staff must help youth to successfully return to the community and transition to adulthood.

This involves supporting youth to achieve critical developmental tasks, such as:

- Establishing identity and autonomy
- Building competencies
- Developing a sense of belonging

It also involves assisting youth to remove barriers to mainstream life (e.g., improve literacy/employability, reduce substance use).

Core Components of a Positive Youth Justice Approach

1. Opportunities for “Learning/Doing”
(Skill Development)
2. Opportunities for “Attaching/Belonging”
(Connections to Pro-Social Adults and Peers)

See: Butts, J., et al., (2010). *Positive Youth Justice: Framing Justice Interventions Using the Concepts of Positive Youth Development*

Promoting Skill Development: Best Practice Principles

- Facilities should offer a wide array of skill development opportunities (e.g., academic, career/tech, recreation)
- Facilities should offer evidence-based cognitive-behavioral interventions
- Facilities should feature skill development in its behavior motivation and disciplinary systems

Promoting Pro-Social Connections: Best Practice Principles

- Facilities should define “family” broadly and support ongoing family engagement
- Facilities should connect youth to community-based supporters and programs (e.g., mentors, volunteers)
- Facilities should offer youth pro-social group opportunities (e.g., youth councils, musical groups, debate teams)
- Facility programs and policies should encourage staff to build positive relationships with youth

Implementing a Facility-Based Developmental Approach

- **Safety is paramount**—youth and staff must feel physically and psychologically safe
- **Fairness is essential**—youth's perceptions of fairness impact their engagement
- **The environment matters**—the facility's physical space should be warm and vibrant
- **Multi-disciplinary coordination is vital**—staff across disciplines (custody, education, medical, behavioral health, etc.) must be trained in the developmental approach and regularly communicate and collaborate with one another

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