BEYOND BARS

KEEPING YOUNG PEOPLE SAFE AT HOME AND OUT OF YOUTH PRISONS

The National Collaboration for Youth

NATIONAL COLLABORATION FOR YOUTH
A Coalition of the National Human Services Assembly

DEBEAUTIFYING THE HOOD

Young Terrace, home to over 1000 residents. Some residents have been living there for a year, some months. This has been my home my whole life I've seen beauty come in and I've seen it taken out.

My first sight of this senseless injustice, I woke up one morning, seen workers cutting, chipping, chopping down a source of our oxygen.

A tree that kids play under. A symbol that signifies strength, unified the projects.

We hoped for a City Art project. Profiling of the lower class stopped that in its tracks.

We wanted it to go on the busy street of Church. To show beauty from the hood

They denied us. I guess beauty can't come from here. Plans for us to be a part of the NEON district were being drawn up, classism took it out of the question

Now that the district is built up, I feel like we are being put down

This marvelous area two blocks from us is glowing

While our light is being dimmed

In 2019 rumors are saying we might be condemned

Until then, they are keeping us comfortable, its shark city

I feel like it's been a frenzy of attacks

Classism is in full effect in 2016

A 16 year old boy like me - judged for where he lives

Life can be taken by the tongue. I hear slurs that stab at the heart

Park Boy, Hood Rat, Thug, Drug Addict

I hear them so much, I start owning them

I am a drug addict, I'm addicted to advocating for the lower class

You denied us, rejected us, disrespected us, and you still expect us to be the victim. You've got it all wrong -

We will be overcoming -We will be triumphant

I've been a soldier of the movement since - age 11

Been marching hard and my soles aren't even worn out yet

Been working with teens and police to stop the conflict

Got the Chief's number calling, saying we need change! - Refining MY community

Didn't get the art project for my neighborhood, get it on side of the only Teen Center in Norfolk.

Now it's showing the beauty of hard work

The beauty of community!

Showing that teens are working hard to change their environment

And it needs to change

We can't lay on our backs while they ripe our sunshine away

If we don't RISE up and lead the change

How will we get the change?

A young man stands before you to show that we don't have time for hopelessness

So join in -- the more soldiers the more powerful the army

The greater the Movement!

By Malik Jordan, age 17,
Teens with a Purpose - The Youth Movement
Norfolk, VA

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INTRODUCTION

As the chair and vice-chair of the National Collaboration for Youth, we are pleased to share this report with you. The National Collaboration for Youth (NCY), a 40-year old affinity group, is a coalition of the National Human Services Assembly member organizations that have a significant interest in youth development. Members of NCY include more than 50 national, non-profit, youth development organizations.

The NCY mission is to provide a united voice as advocates for youth to improve the conditions of young people in America, and to help young people reach their full potential. Collectively, the member organizations of the National Collaboration for Youth:

- Serve more than 40 million young people and their families

- Employ over 100,000 paid staff

- Utilize more than six million volunteers

- Have a physical presence in virtually every community in America

The organizations that comprise the NCY work across generations, with young people, families, neighbors and community institutions. The impact of our organizations indicates that building strong communities and families provides young people with a greater opportunity to achieve well-being and reach their full potential far better than a system that relies on youth incarceration.

These next few pages should serve as a handbook for juvenile justice administrators, legislators, judges, the non-profit community and youth advocates for how to end the practice of youth incarceration, promote public safety and restore a sense of belonging for our young people in their homes and neighborhoods. Our collective experiences tell us that communities that are often characterized by intense needs also have extraordinary assets that can be easily overlooked. We advocate for leveraging those assets as one means to meet those intense needs, and providing greater resources for neighborhood-based services and programs.

We hope that after reading this report, you will join us in supporting communities as the best place for our young people to explore their strengths, get the help they need and ultimately thrive.

Jeff Fleischer
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Chair, National Collaboration for Youth

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A NOTE ON COMMUNITY

We can all relate to a desire to feel a sense of belonging. Usually this conjures up ideas of being part of a community of people who share history, common interests, lineage, culture, homeland or neighborhood, among other things.

A growing body of research suggests that being a part of community that gives one a sense of belonging can be transformative. For diverse groups of people, like military personnel returning from overseas, Peace Corps volunteers returning from out-of-country placements and elders who experience extreme loneliness for the first time, being a part of community reduces social isolation and improves health.[1]

Young people also thrive on community. But for young people in conflict with the law, our response is too often the opposite. By incarcerating young people, we do things we know are harmful: expose them to marginalization and social isolation that can be traumatizing, make them feel (and be) unsafe, and separate them from their families and communities. This separation disproportionately affects black and brown communities, often characterized by tight social fabric.

The youth prison model is past its expiration date, but we have yet to persuade enough people that communities, when properly resourced, can care for young people - even those involved in the justice system and with complex needs - without resorting to removing young people from families.

This report advocates for transforming our approach to young people in conflict with the law by growing community capacity and resources. This means creating and supporting programs and services designed to meet the needs of young people in the contexts of their homes and families.

We acknowledge that closing youth prisons may necessitate a small number of young people who need to be in some type of out-of-home placement, and that many residential programs are increasingly based "close to home" and therefore characterized as "community-based." However, the focus of this report is on developing and investing in in-home supports for the majority of justice-involved young people comprised of a vast array of community services and supports for neighborhoods in need across the country.

Strong communities are in the best position to provide opportunities for justice-involved young people and their families, and they provide benefits from which we all gain. Put simply, they can keep the public safe, hold young people accountable and help them and their families feel a restored sense of belonging.

"Our institutions can offer only service - not care - for care is the freely given commitment from the heart of one to another."

- John McKnight and Peter Block, *The Abundant Community*

DEFINING "CONTINUUM OF CARE" FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE JUVENILE SYSTEM

Many systems have used the term "continuum of care" to describe an array of services to meet a defined need or sets of needs. The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, for example, uses the term "continuum of care" to describe a wide array of services designed to end homelessness and lead to self-sufficiency.[2] The child welfare system has also long used the term to describe various out-of-home placement services along a continuum, from the least restrictive out-of-home placement of foster care to the most restrictive, residential placement.[3] And even the medical field has defined a continuum of care to serve patients with all levels of intensity of need.[4]

To realize the vision of moving from a facility-based juvenile justice system to a community-based system focused on developing and improving community supports for justice-involved youth and their families, we define continuum of care this way:
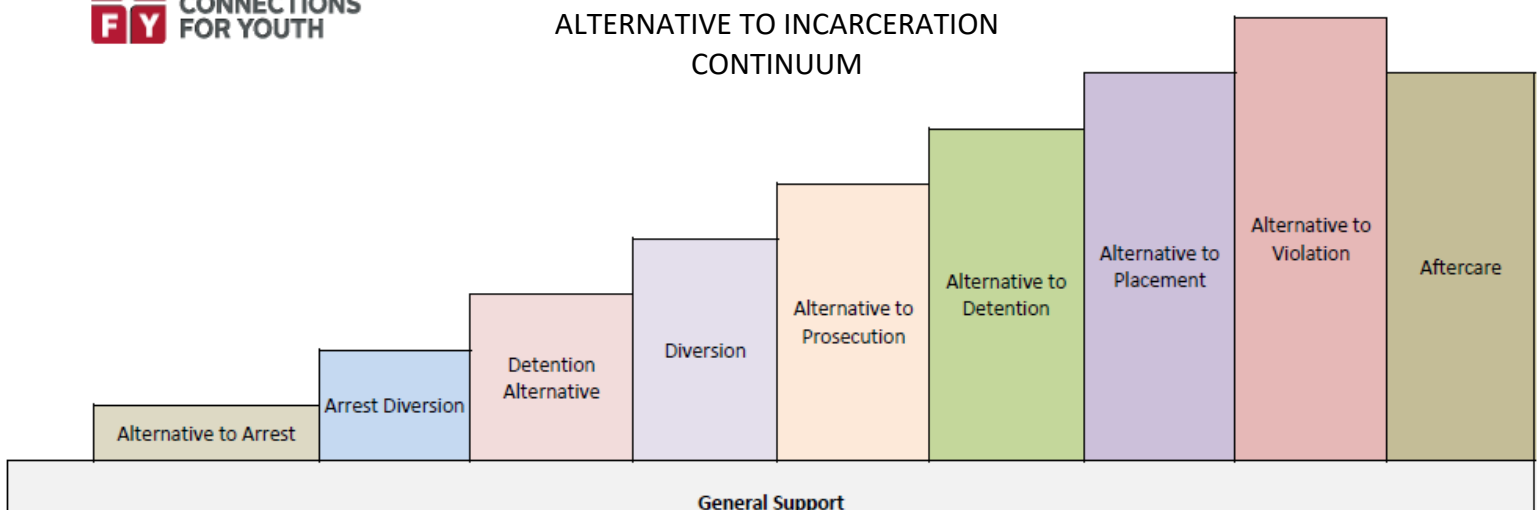
> *A continuum of care is an array of meaningful non-residential community-based programs, supports, resources and services specifically designed to meet the individual needs of young people and their families in their homes. Continua of care cultivate the strengths of youth and families and provide them with what they might need at different stages of intensity in order to keep young people out of the juvenile justice system and confinement.*

It could be argued that a community-based approach with a continuum of responses exists in many communities, but few are equipped to safely meet the complex and diverse needs of young people in the juvenile justice system and their families. The lack of full services in the community is often used as justification to incarcerate or place the young person in a youth prison or other out-of-home placement, even when it would be otherwise unnecessary. Many systems have reduced their use of out-of-home placements for young people but replaced them with surveillance-based alternatives that do little to meet a youth's needs or get to the root cause of why a young person ended up in the system in the first place. Communities need a diverse array of services to meet the equally diverse needs of each young person who needs help - some kids will need very little and others will need a lot.

This continuum of care should exist at all points in the system as illustrated below. Implementing a vast array of services and supports in the community can keep young people from being arrested, from being placed out of the home and can also hasten return from an out-of-home placement.

ALTERNATIVE TO INCARCERATION CONTINUUM

General Support

WHY IS A CONTINUUM OF CARE NEEDED?

As of the writing of this report, 51,000 young people are in some type of out-of-home placement in the juvenile justice system on any given day.[5] Young people should be incarcerated only as a last resort, where they are a danger to themselves or others. Yet most young people incarcerated today do not meet that profile. Many are there because no adequate alternatives or needed services exist in their home communities.

The youth prison is the signature feature of nearly every state juvenile justice system even though it is harmful, ineffective and expensive.   States devote the largest share of their juvenile justice resources to youth confinement and spend a very small portion of their budgets on non-residential community-based programs. For example, in its 2015 Data Resource Guide, the Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice noted that the commonwealth spends only 3.4% of its total budget on community-based programs.[6] While youth confinement has dramatically decreased over the past decade, almost all states still rely on these costly institutions.

Youth prisons are a relic of the past, an approach that came into existence in the late 1820s. They embody facility features common to adult prisons, including: large bed capacity (over 30 beds); correctional staff whose main role is to count and cuff youth; locked rooms, cells or units; razor wire fences; practices similar to those used in adult prisons, including use of chemical restraints such as pepper spray; mechanical restraints such as leg irons, handcuffs, wrap restraints; hogtying; use of isolation and solitary confinement; and documented instances of physical and sexual violence, physical and verbal abuse, and neglect such as underfeeding, removal of sanitary napkins, and toiletry items.[7] Youth prisons are also often geographically isolated, provide minimal contact with family members or opportunity to remain engaged with their communities, and offer limited access to appropriate educational, recreational and other programming.[8]

Youth confinement has not worked for the vast majority of young people. According to a new report published by the Harvard Kennedy School of Government and the National Institutes of Justice, incarcerated youth are re-arrested within two to three years of release and there is mounting evidence that youth incarceration may increase the likelihood of recidivism.[9]

In contrast, a John Jay Research and Evaluation brief looked at 3,523 juvenile justice-involved youth and found that 86% remained arrest free while in a community-based program and 93% were still living in their communities when their time in the program ended.[10] A companion brief which reviewed 1,851 young people found that 6-12 months after discharge from a community-based program, 87% were still living in the community and 95% were not in secure placement.[11] The young people in these studies had a history of prior out-of-home placements and were in the system for misdemeanors, status offenses and felonies.[12]

Importantly, youth incarceration and other out-of-home placements have a disproportionate effect on youth of color in the juvenile justice system. According to a recent report by the W. Haywood Burns institute, black youth are four times as likely as white youth to be placed out of the home; Latino youth are one and half to two times more likely to be placed out of the home and native American young people are 3.7 times more likely to spend time in an out of home placement as white youth.[13] Taken together, race and gender also illustrate disparate treatment. For example, girls of color are twice as likely as white girls to be incarcerated.[14]

We have enough information and lived experiences by young people and families to know that we must abandon a juvenile justice system that relies too heavily on the youth prison and other out-of-home placements. And we know that community-based programs can work. Our dilemma is how to establish communities as the best place to hold youth accountable and provide whatever services are needed so that removing a young person from his or her family

is unnecessary. We cannot decarcerate young people as long as we have more invested in beds than in communities. To maintain the youth prison for young people in need is to promote a continued disinvestment in communities and leaves young people tethered to the justice system, rather than their families and neighborhoods.

Establishing a vast array of community services and supports as replacements to youth prisons will impact more than just a shift in how young people get help for unmet needs. By transforming our approach from a downstream one where we pluck whoever we can out of the river, to an upstream one, we can identify the root causes of a young person's delinquent behavior and prevent them from falling into the river in the first place - or from falling in again, further down the stream.

To date, most efforts at changing the juvenile justice system have used an inside-out approach, such as changing police or court practices, investing in systems change, implementing alternatives to incarceration for low-risk young people, changing length of stay or perfecting the ideal facility for youth.[15]

Others have adopted an incremental approach that reduces youth justice system involvement, but leaves a great number of youth in the current system, like initiatives that eliminate arrest, charge, detention or incarceration only for those who have committed non-violent offenses.

And, even where community-based programs are used, they are not use to scale, are frequently underfunded,[16] and often have exclusive intake policies that reject young people who are toughest to engage, including those with complex needs and histories of violence.[17]

To realize the next step of actually closing youth prisons, the process must be more inclusive and not focused only on accountability for young people. It must also be designed to recognize and build on assets and meet the needs of a majority of young people in conflict with the law, including those with complex needs and violent offenses.

Girls' Needs are Best Addressed in the Community

Girls who enter the juvenile justice system and particularly those who are incarcerated in youth prisons have overwhelmingly experienced multiple and persistent trauma including staggeringly high rates of early sexual abuse. These trauma experiences result in high rates of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, anxiety and depression among girls in the juvenile justice system as well as significant physical health needs. Moreover, many of these girls move deeper into the justice system and are incarcerated, not as a result of violent crime, but rather as a result of misdemeanor offenses and persistent difficulty complying with accountability-based rules of probation and justice systems.[18]

The notion that girls who are vulnerable and who have experienced trauma can be kept safe through incarceration, is exactly wrong. Research on trauma-informed approaches and systems is clear that consistent relationships, safety (both physical and psychological safety), and the ability to assert control over one's life and narrative are critical. Incarceration has the opposite effect: failing to build, and indeed fracturing, girls' relationships in their communities; triggering trauma reactions; and taking away all ability to control their environments. A trauma-informed approach is ideally suited to a model of wraparound services delivered in girls' communities, which should be tailored to the individual girl's strengths, interests and needs and can include: educational and employment opportunities, adult female mentors, and mental health resources familiar with the impact of trauma.

Connecting girls and young women to these resources in their communities sets up continuity of positive community connections as they continue into adulthood.

A Better Model for Serving Youth With Complex Needs

TRADITIONAL CONTINUUM FOR YOUTH WITH COMPLEX NEEDS

Youth not admitted to program because of behavior

Accepted to existing program slot/bed/cell

UNIQUE NEEDS NOT MET IN CONGREGATE CARE

Expelled from program due to behavior

Youth absconds from program

One size does not fit all

INDIVIDUALIZED SERVICE PLANNING PROCESS

Begins with identifying needs and strengths of youth/family

Youth/Family have voice and choice throughout the planning process

SERVICES AND SUPPORTS ARE CREATED TO MEET THE NEEDS AND NURTURE THE STRENGTHS OF THE YOUTH AND FAMILY IN THE COMMUNITY

Adapt existing services to meet unique needs listed in Individualized Service Plan

Flexible Fund purchases services and supports that do not exist currently

Credible messengers have key role in providing support and services

Resize services to fit the family

Needs change as time goes on and so do services and suports

Youth Need Families, Not Prisons

It is not uncommon for people and systems to justify the use of youth prisons as necessary because young people, or their families are "bad." In many instances, systems believe incarcerating young people is helping them stay safe from "bad" families or unsafe communities. There's no denying that many young people in conflict with the law come from families and communities with limited to no resources. But the solution isn't youth prisons.

Most families perceived as "bad" or who "don't want their kids" are barely surviving due to their own unmet needs. From their perspective, sending their young person to a place where they can sleep, have meals and running water may be better than what they can provide, especially during turbulent teenage years when adolescent behavior is challenging. But when we see parents as survivors, and their behavior as an expression of an unmet need, we have the opportunity to help them go from surviving to thriving and providing for their children.

Engaging in true and relentless family engagement by people who possess cultural competency, and in a way that honors a family's autonomy and expertise in itself is the first step to helping a family in need. Most families truly want what is best for their kids but may feel overwhelmed, embarrassed by system involvement and the vulnerability that comes with it.

The concept of voice, choice and ownership (a core principle from the wraparound planning process) acknowledges that many families in need receive system help in the form of directives and prescriptions, i.e., the system tells them what they need or mandates them to do things. These "things" may or may not be helpful, but they are always forced upon a family, more stick than carrot, more blaming than helping.

Voice choice and ownership does three obvious things: gives families a voice in what happens to them, a choice in what happens to them and ownership over what happens to them. So instead of telling a family what they need, we should ask them what they need and how we can help, how we can work in equal partnership. This approach of working in partnership with families often means that they are more invested in the plans they help to create, leading to greater success.

This outreach to family has to be individually designed for them, their needs and their strengths - from everything to matching families with the right person to talk with them to having that person trained in unconditional caring, being non-threatening and having some familiarity with the circumstances under which the family is living because, perhaps they have been there too.

When families feel safe enough to share with others, when a trained and culturally competent person can connect with the family, and learn how the family is both suffering and surviving, that family can feel supported and more confident about taking care of their son or daughter at home. Importantly, young people respond positively to their own family's needs being addressed. When families improve, young people get better too.

Sources: The National Wraparound Initiative, Safely Home

DEVELOPING A CONTINUUM OF CARE: GUIDING PRINCIPLES AND CORE COMPONENTS

In any transformational change it is important to identify guiding principles that will help shepherd the change and maintain values that best serve the goal. Similarly, core components comprise the basic structure of what the change might look like and some key strategies help to tie it all together.

Below are suggested guiding principles, core components, and strategies systems and communities can use to develop a continuum of care. Each of these will help systems provide adequate community supports and services to justice-involved youth and their families, and enable them to safely close their youth prisons.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

A community-based continuum of care for justice-involved youth will only be successful if it can safely decarcerate young people, and instill confidence that it has the capacity and capability to meet the various needs of young people and their families. A full community-based continuum can best succeed by adopting guiding principles that ensure communities:

1 PROMOTE POSITIVE YOUTH JUSTICE/DEVELOPMENT AND AN INCREASED SENSE OF RELATEDNESS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

2 DEFINE PUBLIC SAFETY AS MORE THAN LAW ENFORCEMENT

3 SHIFT FROM A SLOT-BASED SYSTEM TO A NEEDS-BASED SYSTEM

4 SERVICES MUST BE CULTURALLY COMPETENT AND NEIGHBORHOOD-BASED

5 ENSURE THAT SERVICES, PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES ARE FAMILY-CENTERED

6 INCLUDE YOUNG PEOPLE'S IDEAS WHEN CREATING THE CONTINUA

7 IDENTIFY COMMUNITY STRENGTHS AND ASSETS

1 IMPLEMENT SERVICES AND PROGRAMS THAT PROMOTE POSITIVE YOUTH JUSTICE/ DEVELOPMENT AND AN INCREASED SENSE OF RELATEDNESS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Positive Youth Justice adapts the theory of positive youth development to the unique needs of justice-involved youth. According to the Research and Evaluation Center at John Jay School of Criminal Justice, which hosts the Positive Youth Justice website, the Positive Youth Justice model focuses on helping youth learn and build attachments and belonging by focusing on connecting the youth to various domains including work, education, relationships, community, health, and creativity.[19] Positive youth justice also promotes building on a young person's strengths and interests. In addition to positive youth justice and development, systems should partner with communities to focus on what motivates young people to change behaviors.

Paul Tough, author of *How Children Succeed*, recently wrote about how young people are more likely to respond to intrinsic motivation -- where they value interactions with others -- than extrinsic motivation, which is based more on a system of rewards and punishments.[20] Citing to social scientists who have studied and written about "self-determination theory," Tough identified three key human needs that motivate young people:[21]

1. The need for competence or growth

2. The need for autonomy or independence

3. The need for a sense of relatedness or belonging, personal connection

A successful continuum of care for justice-involved youth would establish opportunities for youth to develop autonomy and competence through a focus on strengths and interests. It would also facilitate opportunities for young people to improve a sense of relatedness or belonging to their families and communities through being contributors to their communities and not just recipients of services. Young people with justice system involvement are often marginalized from their own communities, but by developing a continuum of care designed to serve all young people, including justice-involved youth, communities can lead the effort to restore a sense of belonging for all young people.

> **In a continuum of care, youth will be able to develop AUTONOMY, COMPETENCE and a SENSE OF RELATEDNESS or belonging to their families and communities in a way that helps to ESTABLISH OR IMPROVE PUBLIC SAFETY IN THEIR HOME COMMUNITIES.**

2 DEFINE PUBLIC SAFETY AS MORE THAN LAW ENFORCEMENT

Because the target population is justice-involved youth, a guiding key principle for a strong continuum is public safety. Traditionally, public safety has been about police and prisons and justice system carrots and sticks. Public safety is about much more than prisons and police. It's about all the things that characterize safe neighborhoods - access to good schools and jobs, and opportunities to learn, grow, develop and play in safe environments.

Community-based approaches are the safer alternative to placing a youth in a facility because they can address the unique needs of an individual youth at any stage of the process where young people touch the system. These approaches should be more than surveillance initiatives that inform law enforcement about a young person's whereabouts. Instead, improving public safety starts with a needs assessment focused on identifying and meeting needs in the community while keeping young people connected to family and neighborhood supports. It gives a young person tools for responding to triggers and addressing challenges in the context of their real life conditions, rather than in a remote, controlled setting.

In some cases, the safest community alternative may be that the young person is diverted from the system entirely - early on, before formal processing. In this case, the young person is matched with what they need to succeed in the community (like additional assistance with schooling, workforce assistance, or treatment) and kept out of the system from the start.

Making Communities Safe for Young People

Community safety is typically addressed by the courts and probation by imposing a series of restrictions on youth including: electric monitoring; house arrest, curfews, conditions regarding who they may associate with, etc.

For girls, incarceration is often used to "protect" them from sexual and other predators in the community. However, for girls who have experienced trauma, incarceration re-traumatizes and leaves them feeling unsafe.

An array of community services could address community safety - for girls and boys - through the following mechanisms:

- Safety plans that address prior and current safety concerns and provide for structured time within the community, including a paid mentor for as many hours as necessary.

- Plans that provide support and resources for a young person when they are most likely to engage in delinquent activities, including nights and weekends and during times of suspension or expulsion from school.

- Knowledge of youth whereabouts (peers).

- A mentor or credible messenger to provide consistent and constant support and contact with the youth in various community settings and in school.

- Employment, school and vocational planning to address education and career options.

- Intensive wraparound services to understand a youth's strengths, unmet needs, history of trauma and a plan to address them.

3 SHIFT FROM A SLOT-BASED SYSTEM TO A NEEDS-BASED SYSTEM

The current system asks "where do we place these kids?" but it should ask "what do our kids need?" and "how can we help them?" Adhering to a philosophy that community-based continua of care are more about services and supports and meeting needs than filling beds or slots is critical to reducing the number of young people sent to facilities (and especially to out-of-state facilities) to receive these services. A robust continuum doesn't start with creating programs and then fitting the kids into the programs, but rather begins with identifying the needs of the youth and their family and creating a service plan that fits them.

Far too often, young people - especially those with mental or behavioral health diagnoses or struggling with addiction - are sent to facilities simply because services to help them in the community do not exist. Rather than continue to rely on beds to meet these needs, systems and communities can work together to create these services in the community.

In the 1990's New Jersey effectively moved from a slot-based child welfare system to a needs-based system when it passed and implemented the "Bring Our Children Home Act" to bring young people in the child-welfare system home from out-of-state placements. Community groups partnered with government agencies to create a "CART" system (Community Assessment Resource Team). Together they brought the young people home based on the services the young people needed, not slots in a particular program. Before this change, New Jersey led the country in sending young people in the child welfare system out of state; afterwards it was a leader in keeping kids at home. This is not unlike case review teams used in Connecticut and Santa Cruz that are keeping youth out of the deep end of the system.[22]

4 SERVICES MUST BE CULTURALLY COMPETENT AND NEIGHBORHOOD-BASED

There are culturally competent, non-profit youth programs across the country who may be focused on working with low-risk youth, but who, with technical assistance to build their capacity could safely support many more justice-involved youth. Many of these organizations have, as a bedrock principle, a workforce that reflects the young people they serve in terms of race, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, language, and religion.[23] This cultural competency means there is a greater likelihood of successful engagement that is more meaningful and relevant to young people and their families.

While cultural competency applies to both rural and urban communities, culturally competent programs can also help address the racial disparities that plague the juvenile justice system. Young people of color are incarcerated at higher rates than their white counterparts and stay in prisons longer. Recent research on race shows that young black boys are perceived as more culpable and more dangerous than their white counterparts, and similarly skewed perceptions exist for Latino boys.[24] One way to reduce the racial and ethnic disparities and these negative perceptions is to prioritize culturally competent, neighborhood-based services designed to meet various needs of young people.[25] Resourcing the community to provide services and programs based on youth needs gives neighborhoods and systems the opportunity for true community engagement through hiring of "credible messengers," or street workers whose primary credential is their expertise in the community and the ability to engage young people.

Importantly, systems should work with communities to limit and reduce statutory barriers that prohibit people with criminal histories from working with young people.

When these services are truly community-based, young people won't be tethered to a local or state juvenile justice agency to get services they need. In the community, young people have the opportunity to earn and grow social capital, exercise opportunities to restore any harm they've done, and also when it applies to them, have their own victimhood recognized, transforming themselves from recipients of services to contributors to their communities.

Photo by David Y. Lee for Public Welfare Foundation

In 2016, Washington D.C. implemented its "credible messenger initiative," which it describes as:

The "Credible Messenger Initiative" at the Department of Youth Rehabilitation Services (DYRS) is a transformative mentoring intervention program for youth committed to the agency, with a restorative justice philosophy for young people in the community at large. The mission of the initiative is to connect all young people in the care and custody of DYRS to healthy homes and supportive communities, and to provide preventative supports to all youth in Washington D.C.

Credible messengers are neighborhood leaders, experienced youth advocates and individuals with relevant life experiences whose role is to help youth transform attitudes and behaviors around violence. They serve young people whose needs go far beyond the traditional mentoring approach of companionship, confidence-building and typical academic, social or career guidance. They are able to connect with the most challenging young people because they:

- Come from the same communities

- Are formerly incarcerated or were involved in the justice system

- Have turned their lives around

- Demonstrate integrity and transformation

- Are skilled and trained in mentoring young people

Source: http://dyrs.dc.gov/page/credible-messenger-initiative

5 ENSURE THAT SERVICES, PROGRAMS AND RESOURCES ARE FAMILY-CENTERED

Families must be recognized as experts in their own children's lives. It isn't uncommon for families to be seen as a part of the problem, but children frequently gravitate back to their families and it is therefore difficult to help a young person in isolation from his or her family. Young people also respond well to their families getting their needs met.

Thus, several jurisdictions have introduced Family Navigator programs which allow families of justice-involved youth to support new families coming into contact with the system.[26] A Family Navigator can help in many ways, from a quick one time resource liaison between community agencies and its families; to an advocate that can help families navigate their child's involvement through the entire time that they are involved in the juvenile justice system.

For example, in 2007, Colorado established the Family Advocacy Demonstration Program, which provided peer support for families in the justice system in three locations: Denver (urban), Jefferson County (suburban), and Montrose County (rural).[27] Each jurisdiction partnered with a local family advocacy organization to provide family-driven, youth-guided advocacy services. The goal of the pilot program was to ensure that youth and families get access to necessary services and keep them from re-offending. Pilot sites were able to use funds from the demonstration program to pay for a family advocate, a parent or primary guardian who has raised or cared for a child with a mental health or co-occurring disorder, and a family system navigator, an individual who has the skills, experience, and knowledge to work with these youth.

The program has been evaluated with some very promising findings. During the study period, only 9 of the 90 participating youth (10%) were convicted of additional crimes after enrolling in the family advocacy program.[28] Given the high-risk nature of the youth included in the program, the Colorado Department of Public Safety, Office of Research and Statistics, found the program to be cost-effective, explaining that if sites were able to avert a single conviction for one youth in the program, estimated at a cost of $57,276, sites could offset nearly 99.7% of the average cost to run the entire program in the site.[29]

6 INCLUDE YOUNG PEOPLE'S IDEAS WHEN CREATING THE CONTINUA

In addition to families, youth and young people have a lot to contribute to a system designed to meet their needs.

In writing this report, we held several youth visioning sessions in Middlesex County, New Jersey, Richmond, Virginia, Connecticut, and Ft. Worth, Texas, where young people shared their ideas for what a transformed, community-based system would look like.

The young people we met with suggested a system that provides them with jobs, but also access to information that could help them grow their future economic opportunity; family support programs, including respite, more prevention and community-based alternatives; and help alleviating crippling fines, small business loans and entrepreneurship classes and opportunities to give back.[30] Young people also can contribute to asset mapping to develop a system best designed to meet their diverse needs. The vast majority of the young people who participated in the visioning sessions felt optimistic that if communities could provide these things, the need for youth prisons would disappear. This same sentiment that young people shared with us is also reinforced by national polling data from the GBA Strategies, in which young people, more than any other age group, favored creating and funding alternatives to youth prisons.[31]

Recommendations From Youth Visioning Sessions

Below is a summary of recommendations from our youth visioning sessions in New Jersey, Virginia,[32] Connecticut and Texas.
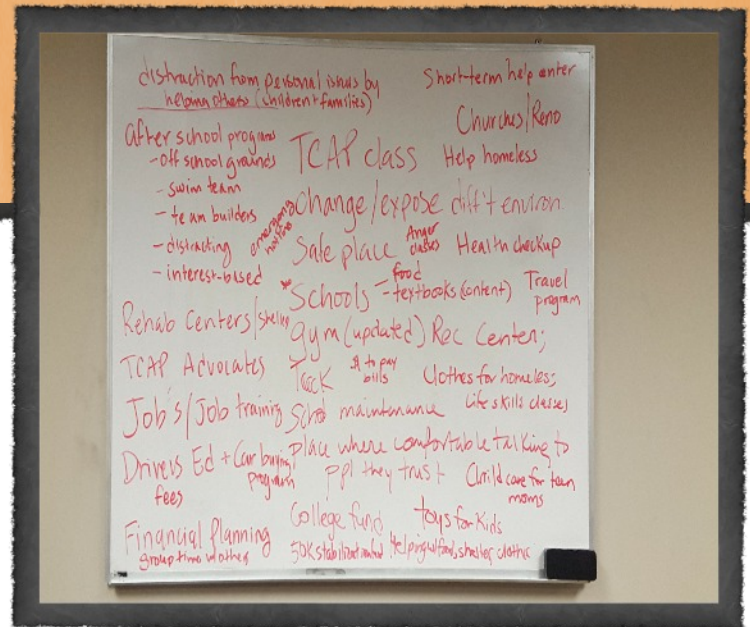
COMMUNITY REINVESTMENT SHOULD INCLUDE:

- housing and community revitalization projects in under-resourced neighborhoods
- job programs that offer youth skill-building opportunities
- exposure to new experiences and activities to help them find and build on their interests

SYSTEMS CHANGE

- provide system-involved young people with mentors who are credible messengers as an alternative to incarceration
- offer support to parents and family members
- integrate system-involved youth in positive youth development programs that give them a chance to mix with peers who are not justice system-involved
- eliminate racial and ethnic disparity at every stage of the justice process
- address the issues of fines
- create opportunities for youth to obtain small business loans
- opportunities to give back

Tarrant County Youth Advocate Programs Youth Visioning Session

" Don't just keep all the kids who have been incarcerated together. Don't make them feel they are together because they are all messed up. You can also learn from other people's experiences - so by talking with you, I might find out that when you did that thing, you got locked up, so I don't want to do it.

- A YOUTH TALKING ABOUT MIXING ADJUDICATED YOUTH WITH OTHER YOUTH

" If you are stuck in the system, you get HOPELESS and you don't know what else is out there, so if there were clubs and groups to go to and people to talk to and actually tell you what exists, that would change circumstances for a lot of people.

- A YOUTH SPEAKING ABOUT HOW TO INVEST IN NEIGHBORHOOD PROGRAMS THAT EXPOSE YOUTH TO NEW EXPERIENCES AND ACTIVITIES

7 IDENTIFY COMMUNITY STRENGTHS AND ASSETS

Asset mapping in communities is a key strategy to achieving well-being for justice-involved young people and public safety for families and communities.[33] It provides a way for a community to identify its assets, resources and strengths that it can build upon to develop strengths and interests of individuals.

Mapping community assets is a meaningful exercise because it enables one to take stock of all the resources a community already has, even where certain communities are consistently characterized only by their challenges. Every community, no matter how depressed, has assets, some of which can be very diverse.

For example, assets could include people indigenous to the community who have gifts to contribute and skills and experiences that could help others. Structures, such as schools, and open spaces like parks are assets that can tether one to a community in positive ways and provide opportunities to develop, feel safe and engage with other community members. Partnering with indigenous people, neighborhoods and institutions will reveal a community's strengths. The opportunity to engage in community service is an asset, as are local businesses willing to engage, mentor and hire our young people.

Asset mapping will help communities see how much they have to build on, feel pride in the community and also identify opportunities to develop a complete array of services for justice-involved young people.

> "Communities can only be built by focusing on the strengths and capacities of the citizens who call that community home. Those who have escaped the lures of deficiency, therefore, have been drawing up a new map based on old truths, an 'Assets Map'...
>
> At the center of the map, and of the community building process, lie the 'gifts' of individual residents, their knowledge, skills, resources, values, and commitments.

- John Kretzman
Building Communities from the Inside Out

CORE COMPONENTS

Community providers are central to this continuum as they have the expertise in individualized service planning and the hiring of credible messengers and family advocates who can be the case managers, advocates, and lead workers necessary for success. As the needs of youth are revealed, a community's continuum of care could include any and all of these supports and services (and others identified by the community):

RESPITE AND SUPPORT FOR FAMILIES WITH COMPLEX NEEDS

Family support programs help families by providing in-home counseling, crisis intervention, respite care and mutual support groups. Many families are struggling to survive and may feel overwhelmed, especially when caring for a child with complex needs. Respite and mutual support from other parents and from more formal supports can give parents what they need to better help their young person access appropriate services.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AND HOLISTIC VICTIM SERVICES

Community mental health or behavioral health centers are crucial to a robust continuum. Most youth in the juvenile justice system have histories of trauma, past abuse, neglect and abandonment, an emotional disability or medical needs that require a mental health professional to work hand in hand with Credible Messengers to get the help and support they need. While these issues do need to be addressed with appropriate treatment, most young people who present with a mental health challenge can be served in their home community by a range of specially trained staff including paraprofessionals and non-traditional therapists. For these few youth who face more complex mental health challenges, an array of clinicians who specialize in sexual abuse, sexual offending, trauma, substance abuse, fire setting, and other serious behaviors should be available to work with the youth and their families as part of the team. These clinicians should make themselves available to meet a family's needs at a time and place convenient for the family. Flex funds may be used to help pay for some of these services.

In addition to these intensive services, systems also should recognize that young people in the justice system are frequently victims themselves and provide holistic services to address the needs of ALL crime victims.

Young people who are survivors of crime, especially youth of color, are often overlooked by traditional victims services programs. When their needs aren't met, a cycle of further harm can ensue. Public health-oriented violence prevention experts note that "hurt people hurt people." Communities need to provide developmentally and culturally appropriate services that foster healing for young people who have experienced violence and other forms of harm.[34]

SUBSTANCE USE

For those with substance abuse and addiction issues, ongoing alcohol/drug use is one of the biggest obstacles to success for a young person in the juvenile justice system. More than 50% of incarcerated young people and 78% of youth involved in the justice system but not incarcerated are substance-involved.[35] Substance abuse and addiction is a priority that needs to be addressed if young people are to succeed. Community substance abuse strategies must include relentless outreach to go where the youth are and not just wait until the youth is ready for treatment.

All continua of care should include the elements of effective alternatives for complex-needs youth, laid out in the report, *Safely Home*, including:

- Accept all kids and adopt "no reject" policies
- Be available, accessible and flexible
- Empower voice, choice & ownership
- Individualize services for each youth
- Ensure family-focused services
- Take a strength-based approach
- Provide culturally competent services
- Engage youth in work
- Prioritize safety and crisis planning
- Provide unconditional caring (no-eject policies)
- Create opportunities for civic engagement and giving back

Formal treatment for substance use, misuse and abuse is only one part of what experts define as "recovery." Most young people with a history of substance use also need to address additional associated challenges to support an ongoing drug-free lifestyle once leaving treatment services. Reconnecting at school and/or employment, addressing other mental health issues including effects of trauma or abuse in its many forms, as well as building strong supportive connections to a positive social support system within his/her community are all crucial elements of sustainable recovery.

Additionally, successful "treatment" does not happen in the 30 or 45 days of outpatient treatment services on its own.[36] Assertive "aftercare" should be seen as part of the treatment, not an optional auxiliary service that is traditionally an hour a week of group following treatment. In other words, "aftercare" is not AFTER care, but PART OF care.
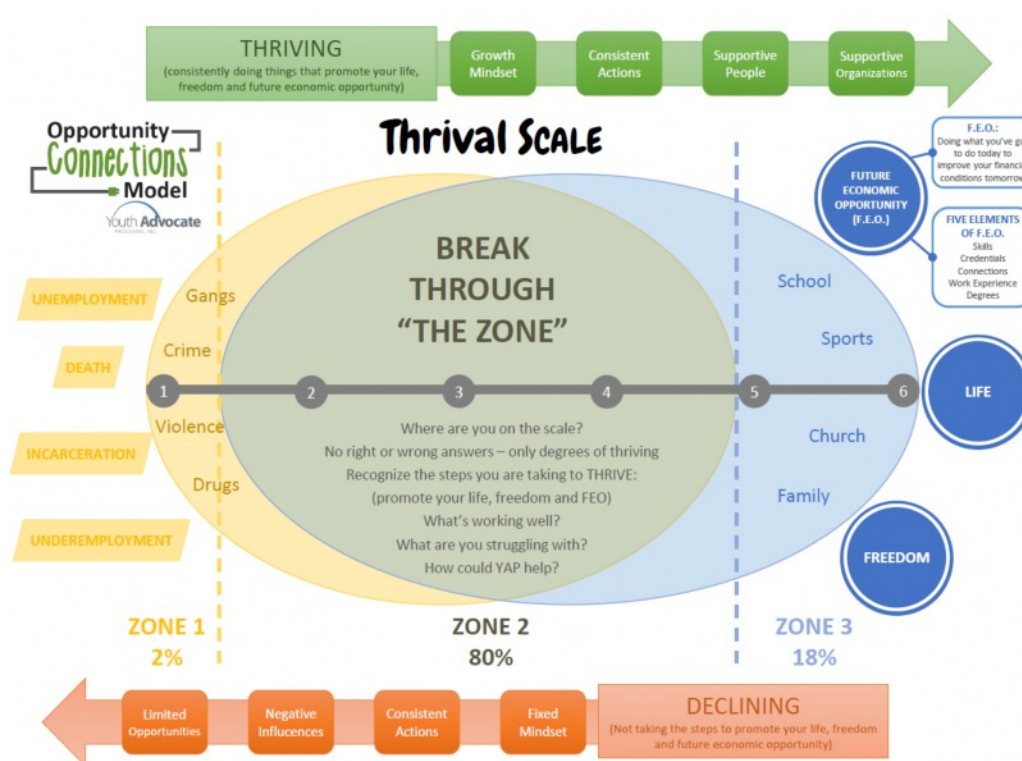
Programs should consider using people in recovery as credible messengers for this population of young people, and continue support for at least a year that includes work with the family, especially where the family is also struggling with addiction. Greater peer support and intensive aftercare also maximize the opportunity to work with the young person in real time, when triggers and environmental factors can affect a young person's success in recovery.

MOVING PAST WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT TO BUILD FUTURE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Juvenile justice systems must move past using the term "workforce development." While the term is ingrained in modern vocabulary describing our nation's system of job readiness and career preparation, its use and literalism misdirects the type of support and investments that are truly needed to help the most vulnerable and marginalized young people realize long term labor force attachments and economic opportunity.

Juvenile justice systems must focus on building a Future Economic Opportunity (FEO) system using relevant precepts of successful wraparound service models that give youth a chance at a positive, non-institutionalized future and incorporate them with elements of positive youth justice programs that aid youth in attaching the world of work and developing a sense of belonging to it.

Juvenile justice systems must focus on developing a full continuum that includes programs that allow young people to thrive. (See image, below). Young people should be able to access their future economic opportunity via: access to labor market information and workforce skills; learning how to acquire credentials in growth industries and to develop social capital in the labor market.

The Thrival Scale® is a registered trademark of Youth Advocate Programs, Inc. © 2015

Systems often focus on the limited approach of funding job placement programs.[37] Job placement should be a part of a program that helps young people grow their future economic opportunities, but not the only part. Too many times, young people in the justice system complete job placement programs only to find getting a job impossible. Likewise, many of our young people are maligned in the community and are discriminated against in their search for employment.

These programs should also provide young people with ongoing support where young people can learn how to apply the labor market information and workforce skills and that conceptualize the importance of work to an individual and in a community context. Local businesses should partner to help employ young people so that young people have the opportunity to transform how businesses and communities see them. Opportunities for subsidized employment should also be included.

ACCESS TO EDUCATION INCLUDING PROGRAMS FOR CREDIT RECOVERY, REMEDIATION AND GIFTED LEARNING

Education is key to the youth's success. Yet justice-involved young people are often segregated in alternative schools or allowed or encouraged to leave school. Schools must be a strong and willing partner in the continuum of care from the inception. Schools don't have to go it alone - they can partner with credible messengers, mental health workers, outreach workers, job coaches and mentors. A team can work closely with school personnel to help create the supports needed for our youth to succeed. Alternative schools and GED programs can also play a role. Vocational schools and vocational training programs must also play a crucial role. Our youth often have hidden talent in the trades and crafts so schools, unions and businesses could contribute by offering individualized training programs and apprenticeships for our youth.

SAFE PLACES AND OPPORTUNITIES TO RECREATE

Recreation and cultural programs are also essential to a continuum. Youth can build on their strengths and identify interests they didn't know they had through well thought out afterschool, evening and weekend activities. Young people should be encouraged to share their interests to ensure that the recreation programs provide the opportunity for them to develop those interests and be exposed to new experiences.

Places for youth to be physically and psychologically safe and to access positive people, services and supports could include places like store fronts, community centers, safe houses, youth cafes, and youth run businesses located in areas where youth truly feel safe.

GANG INTERVENTION

Young people involved in gangs need what every other young person needs. Programs designed for gang-involved young people should use credible messengers - including former gang members - to work with gang leaders and provide connections to needed services and jobs, mediation and crisis intervention. Good gang intervention programs will also have a designated safe space, and staff trained in de-escalation who divert gang leaders towards using their skills to pro-social activities. Many gang members have leadership skills that can be redirected to solve community problems.

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Restorative justice involves a set of practices, such as peace circles, that respectfully and supportively address the needs of everyone affected by harmful acts. Restorative processes engage youth responsible for harm, those they have harmed, and their respective families, supporters and communities in order to come up with a mutually acceptable response to the situation. Restorative justice programs enable young people to understand the impact of their actions on other people, to be held accountable and take responsibility for making amends to those they have harmed, and to be supported in taking steps to ensure that they don't cause that harm again. Thus, restorative justice is an approach that furthers youth development and integration with their family and community.[38]

Restorative justice is an extremely effective response for a wide range of situations, especially serious offenses and conflicts. In several other countries, restorative justice is the default response to youth in conflict with the law. Here in the United States, many schools are successfully using restorative justice practices to address school discipline issues instead of using suspension, expulsion and arrest. However, a wider use of restorative justice is emerging as a response that communities can use both to divert youth from the justice system and to avoid relying on incarceration to resolve situations involving serious harm.

MOBILE CRISIS INTERVENTION OUTREACH

An emergency crisis service that can meet young people and families where they are and when they need help the most -- even if outside the hours of a particular service --can help avert future delinquency and meet exigent needs in real time.
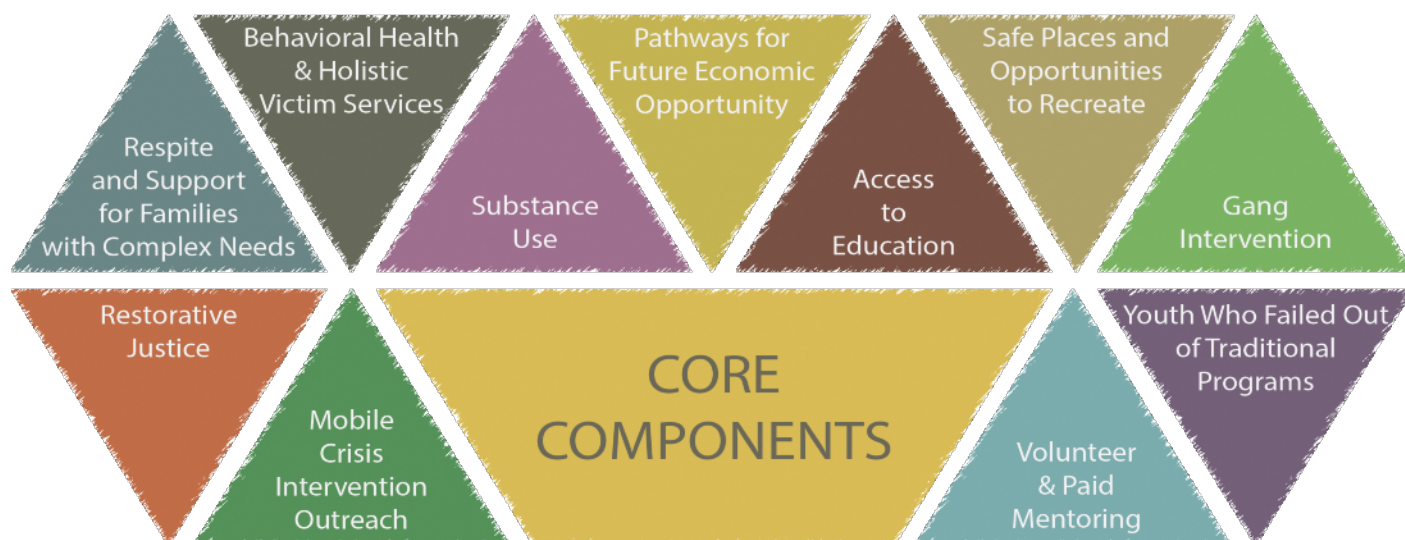
VOLUNTEER AND PAID MENTORING

Mentoring programs, both paid and volunteer, can also help young people feel safe, like they matter and like someone cares about them. Volunteer mentoring can be a great asset to any community, and can be complemented by paid mentoring. Volunteer mentoring on its own may be insufficient since studies show that most volunteer mentors self terminate within six weeks.[39] But with the consistency of a paid mentor, young people can feel continuity of a caring adult in his or her life. Mentoring also has a positive effect on risk factors for justice system involvement including absenteeism and behavioral problems.[40]

YOUTH WHO FAIL OUT OF TRADITIONAL PROGRAMS

Young people should be expected to "fail" out of programs, and therefore, a continuum must include intensive non-residential programs for young people and families who continue to struggle despite access to other programming. These programs can provide the family with additional supports and alleviate the need to remove the young person from his or her home. These types of intensive programs should provide upwards of 15 hours a week of individual and group time for young people, with time spent decreasing as the young person begins to stabilize.

Perhaps most important is that an array of community supports provides the opportunity for the community and its members to develop trusting relationships with young people and their families that can last over a substantial period of time so that the support is not short-lived. Our work with young people has to address their needs and the core reasons for their entering the system in the first place, and help them replace negative behaviors with a sense of belonging and connection to their community.

TYING IT ALL TOGETHER:
AN INDIVIDUALIZED SERVICE PLAN

- **WRAPAROUND PLANNING**
- **CREDIBLE MESSENGERS**
- **FAMILY ADVOCACY**
- **FLEXIBLE FUND**
- **CRISIS & SAFETY PLANNING**

A true and robust continuum of care for high-risk youth in the juvenile justice system will vary from community to community. It will depend on the youth, families and their needs, the provider community, employers, faith based organizations, racial disparities, and the culture of the juvenile justice system.

All communities however, especially those where young people are overrepresented in the juvenile justice system, need a basic continuum of supports and services organized in such a way that youth and their families feel a sense of belonging and also get their needs met in different life domains. This includes legal mandates and youth accountability but also needs related to education, health, financial, emotional well-being, substance use and abuse and others. To effectively do this, a community-based continuum needs a mechanism to assess the needs and build a service plan for each young person that has a good chance of working.

Therefore, the first component would be to identify a community provider or several community providers who have the capacity (or could develop the capacity) to conduct assessments and develop individualized, unique and meaningful service plans for each youth and family. This process should be driven by youth needs, not programmatic slots. All youth and families have unique needs and so each will require an individualized service plan that best meets their needs, identifies and builds on their strengths and interests and connects them to positive community people who can help with the identified areas. The following strategies will help systems and communities tie it all together.

WRAPAROUND PLANNING PROCESS: Community providers should be trained in the Wraparound planning process, Person Centered Planning or Family Conferencing that is designed to plan for the youth and families with the most complex needs. Many young people need help to meet very basic needs like access to food and shelter, getting back into school and having heat in the winter. These needs can be easily overlooked in a system focused on slots and available services, even though meeting basic needs can be transformative. The wraparound planning process creates a safe space for families to identify their needs without feeling shame or being blamed, and to find the appropriate service or intervention.

CREDIBLE MESSENGERS: Community providers should also have the capability and permission to recruit and hire "Credible Messengers" from the neighborhoods where the youth live. Credible Messengers are people from the community who have a knack for working with youth, know the culture, resources and strengths of the community, may have prior justice system involvement, and can help youth and families navigate through difficult situations. Credible Messengers may not have the degrees or credentials that other traditional professionals have, but they have an important expertise in their neighborhoods and can develop trusting relationships with youth whose needs are not met through traditional professionals and programming.

FAMILY ADVOCACY: Family Advocates are essential to the continuum. Families often feel hopeless, helpless and overwhelmed, blamed and shamed and need a trusted advocate to help them navigate the system and fully participate. Families should always have a voice in expressing their needs and what may work for them, access to decision making regarding their plan and ownership over the plan once it's completed because they had a hand in creating it.

FLEXIBLE FUND FOR EXTRAORDINARY NEEDS: On occasion, young people will have extraordinary needs that will fall outside of the services in the continuum. For example, a young person with an arson case may need the assistance of a therapist who specializes in arson. Establishing a flexible fund will enable young people whose needs fall outside of the continuum to still access the services they need in their community without needing to be placed out of the home.

CRISIS AND SAFETY PLANNING: Many justice-involved young people may have safety issues. Developing a crisis and safety plan with the young person and family can help identify and get in front of threats and plan for safe responses to emergencies.

HOW TO DEVELOP A CONTINUUM OF CARE

In its simplest iteration, developing a community-based continuum of care as a means to close youth prisons represents a transformational change. Dr. John Kotter, the Harvard professor and best selling author of *Leading Change,* created an "eight step process for leading change" designed to lead sustainable and meaningful transformation.[41] Applying his eight step process to juvenile justice systems results in the following steps for systems and communities to move from a facility-based juvenile justice system to a community-based juvenile justice system.

**STEP #1:
Establish a
Sense of Urgency**

Rejecting youth prisons as the best way to meet youth needs, achieve public safety or improve youth outcomes

- Young people are susceptible to abuse and harm in institutional settings
- Youth prisons are costly
- Full neighborhoods deteriorate as youth (and adult) incarceration increases
- Youth incarceration is racially unjust
- Youth detention and incarceration do a poor job of improving youth outcomes
- Youth incarceration isolates young people from their families and communities

**STEP #2:
Creating the
Guiding Coalition**

Establishing expertise of youth, family and community in addition to that of systems and providers to safely decarcerate young people

- Coalition must be broad-based and include youth and families, community leaders, providers, advocates, representatives from different systems, including child welfare, mental health, education, workforce boards, health, managed care, and representatives from city, county, state, federal government agencies who commit to sharing data, resources and power
- Coalition must look to identify the benefits of creating a community continuum and relying less on youth prisons

STEP #3: Developing a Vision and Strategy

Defining a set of principles unique to community and culture for how to best serve young people in need

- Developing guiding principles
- Developing a vision of what the community continuum could look like in your community
- Research various systems, hold focus groups, look at other local and national models, not focused on just formal evidence based programs
- Use innovative ways to measure success, including feedback from point of view of kids, families, peers, advocates, judges, police, etc.

STEP #4: Communicating the Change Vision

Community and staff forums to share the vision, strategy and principles

- Create a report-out schedule and plan for how to implement the vision, strategy and principles with authentic inclusion of ideas from others
- Hold community forums, create and disseminate surveys, facilitate town meetings, youth focus groups, organize a provider coalition
- Establish "buy in" for the vision and strategy with key partners, including judges, probation, public defenders, private attorneys, businesses, police, consumers, educators, different city, county, state human service systems

STEP #5: Empowering Broad-Based Action

Creating and funding a plan to implement the vision, strategy and principles that has been shared with others

- Systems and communities must now work together to implement the plans
- Let people know what programs and services will be funded to create a continuum that can make others feel confident keeping a young person in the community instead of being places out of the home
- Explain how these programs and services will be funded
- Appoint key person to oversee the transition/change
- Continue education on why community continua of care is better than the youth prison model and how it could work

STEP #6: Generating Short-term Wins

Track and acknowledge early, positive outcomes, including non-traditional outcomes for a juvenile justice system, such as stronger families and:

- Reduce prison populations
- New alternatives being used
- Savings and redirection of funds, enhancing opportunity to leverage other funds
- Engagement with community and non-residential providers
- Positive outcomes such as school attendance and performance
- Reduced substance abuse
- Reduction in racial disparity
- Appropriate programs for girls
- and communities

STEP #7: Consolidating Gains and Producing More Change

Official redirection of dollars earmarked for community vs. facility

- Action creates momentum; put the resources to buy what you want to create
- Provide training on best practices
- Look at different funding strategies: SIB's, redirection, foundations, waivers, corporations
- Identify gaps and keep plugging the gaps

STEP #8: Anchoring New Approaches in Culture

Closing youth prisons and depending instead on the community and its array of services to safely meet the needs of any young person and their family, in the community

- Prison no longer the knee jerk option
- In a community-based juvenile justice system, able to address the root causes of youth crime
- Focus on building intrinsic motivation, not just external motivation (reward and punishment)
- Work on addressing the challenges that exist upstream instead of dealing with what comes downstream
- New system is characterized by a needs-based approach, building on strengths, family focused system, credible messengers/cultural competence, work opportunities for young people and career opportunities for community members
- Easier to engage young people in need (and their families) in the contexts of their homes and communities than in any institutional setting

EXAMPLES OF
CONTINUA OF CARE

In the context of juvenile justice, few systems have established continua of care described above for justice-involved young people. Some systems are working towards developing more robust resources and services in the community to meet an array of needs.

Two such sites that stand out are Lucas County, OH (Toledo) and Tarrant County, TX (Ft. Worth), although each site took different approaches to funding their respective reforms. From 2000 until today, Lucas County's leadership decided to redirect the dollars they had to create services that align with their vision of greatly reducing the number of young people in detention and those committed from Lucas County. In the 1990's, Tarrant County leadership rejected dollars earmarked for construction of a new detention facility and instead used another source of local dollars to create and fund non-residential community services.

Regardless of the path, both jurisdictions had things in common: collaboration; breaking down silos and sharing resources with other agencies; and working with community members and community-based providers to successfully reduce reliance on detention and to reduce the number of young people committed from their counties. Their success was dependent on partnerships with various stakeholders and the community. Neither jurisdiction shied away from working with high-risk young people and their families in the community; in fact they embraced it as their first step.

LUCAS COUNTY (SHIFTING RESOURCES TO ALIGN WITH VISION AND MISSION)[42]

Lucas County, Ohio has emerged as a national model for how to develop a local continuum of care for justice-involved youth. In transforming from a facility-based system to a community-based system, Lucas County, led by Chief Judge Denise Cubbon and Court Administrator Deborah Hodges, engaged in a process to sustain change.

They recognized that detention and commitment were not what was best for young people and that they had the ability to change their own system to meet the needs of their community. Lucas County embarked on a mission to learn all they could about what worked elsewhere, building comradery with other agency heads and reformers to see what they could import into Lucas County. They also learned about how to better engage with families and recognized the need for mutual community and system education and outreach. They knew collaboration and building community partnerships was key to developing a community-based continuum consistent with their vision.

Lucas County also understood that moving from the system they had to the system they wanted depended on staff who could accomplish the mission and also the vision. They needed to retain and find people with the right skills but also with the right mindset to do the type of work they envisioned - a new philosophy that was less corrections-oriented and more rehabilitative.

With this in mind, they developed an Assessment Center and a growing number of corresponding services, so that young people who didn't need to be detained or committed could get the services they needed without being removed from their homes. Staff at the Assessment Center are almost all social workers; none are corrections officers.

> "Detention and youth prison will always be the default, so if we don't have alternatives, and a full continuum even for our toughest kids, they are going to be locked up."
>
> Deborah Hodges,
> Lucas County Court Administrator

Lucas County's juvenile court leaders also reached out to the community and were surprised by the feedback. They held community forums, and people attended. As Deborah Hodges put it, "We were arrogant. We thought the community wouldn't come. There can be no arrogance in this work. When you think you know it all, you should leave."

In addition to staffing changes and creating the Assessment Center, Lucas County also devoted time and resources to staff training and coordination and community safety training. They took the bold step of setting a vision for themselves of no misdemeanants on probation, by creating services for them in the community. And perhaps most importantly, they constantly engage in a process of re-addressing and re-assessing the changes they have made, and building enough confidence in the process to take acceptable risks to achieve better outcomes for young people.

This shift for Lucas County resulted in saving dollars, achieving better outcomes for young people, growing community confidence, greater teamwork and established the County as a national model. Other key accomplishments include:

- Significant reduction in kids sent to state corrections and county detention

- Implementation of new processes for no misdemeanants on probation

- Restructured staff to achieve slated mission

- Devoted resources to the front and back door of the system

- Reduced DMC significantly by changing policy around school-based arrests

" We were taking a risk and watching it work.

- Kendra Kec, Lucas County Juvenile Court

TARRANT COUNTY TEXAS (REJECTING RESOURCES THAT DIDN'T MATCH THE VISION)
In 1996 when systems regularly accepted funding for building new prisons and correctional institutions, Tarrant County's Chief of Juvenile Probation, Carey Cockerell, declined to accept the money. The local paper, the Star Telegram, published an editorial deriding Tarrant County as "not tough enough." Years later, then-administrator Randy Turner, noted that the decision not to build institutions was "good, long-term insight."[43]

The decision to reject dollars to fund new facilities was based on a 25-page report about youth incarceration that included a 20-year projection for Tarrant County which was not promising.[44] It established that using detention and incarceration for young people was not what was best for families. Carey Cockerell felt that building more bricks and mortar to lock up young people would not enhance public safety and was not consistent with the values of his department or with what research said was best for young people.

In the mid-1990's Tarrant County's toughest neighborhoods were under the grip of the Bloods and the Crips in the Poly-Stop-Six community of Ft. Worth. The county was sending young people to youth prisons at unacceptably high rates. Mr. Cockerell brought in Youth Advocate Programs and created the Tarrant County Advocate Program (TCAP) specifically to engage the toughest young people and their families as a means to avoid detention and commitment.[45]

In addition to creating this intensive program, Tarrant County Probation worked closely with the county and state lead behavioral health organization, MHMR and with other providers. Today, Lena Pope, one of the major providers of both residential and community services for justice-involved youth in the early 1990's, no longer provides residential services for young people in the justice system because the county would not fund it.[46]

In a true spirit of collaboration, Tarrant County created a continuum of community-based, non-residential services designed to meet an array of needs and to serve populations that had traditionally been served primarily in correctional or other residential setting. Their continua included not just the TCAP program, but also intensive behavioral health services, sex offender services, and services for multi-system involved youth. Tarrant County leaders deliberately looked outward to their partners, and understood the various areas of expertise, while also recognizing the untapped expertise in the community as well.[47]

As in Lucas County, Tarrant County's leaders recognized the need for community education about how it intended to serve these young people in the community. Initially, the community was not receptive to the changes. Tarrant County assembled a team of community leaders that included elected officials, families, juvenile justice system leaders, representatives from MHMR, community providers and hospital staff to hold forums where they could clearly articulate their vision and listen to the community's concerns. Together, this leadership team and the community turned Tarrant County Probation into a national model of how to safely meet young people's needs in the community without resorting to incarceration. They also enjoyed great success in integrating community service into their reforms, strengthening families, addressing substance abuse and reducing state commitments.

As reported in *Less Cost, More Safety,*[48] in 2000, Tarrant County achieved the following results:

- 996 young people completed more than 19,000 hours of community service and over $65,000 in restitution

- 85.5% of young people not placed in the state's youth prisons

- 91% of young people receiving family preservation services stayed together and were not subsequently committed, with 75% having no subsequent contact with the juvenile justice system

And for the most intensive program, Tarrant County Advocate Program, the number of young people committed to the state's youth prisons dropped 44% in one year and 91% did not recidivate. The county also had programs for sex offenders, where only 1 out of 183 committed a new sex offense, and intensive probation where 82% completed the program without being committed.[49]

Eventually, the community buy-in was so great that it had a ripple effect, and other city commissioners wanted these services and supports in their communities. Elected officials brought community members in to ask which services they believed should continue to receive funding, so their input was critical in keeping programs that worked for the community, in the community.

FUNDING A CONTINUUM OF CARE FOR JUSTICE-INVOLVED YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES

Funding an array of community services, programs and resources to address needs and build on strengths of young people can be a challenge. However, innovative funding methods can help systems reduce youth incarceration and grow its community resources. Legislative initiatives like Reclaim Ohio, Targeted Reclaim, and Redeploy Illinois are designed to shift funds from facilities to communities and are a key way states can tailor a reinvestment strategy that matches each state's unique assets and needs. In addition, here are a few ways systems can work with the community to fund the array of services, programs and resources described above.

REDIRECTION
Juvenile justice systems spend the bulk of their budgets on some type of out-of-home placement, whether it be a youth prison or some type of congregate care. If these systems redirect the dollars currently spent on beds and residential facilities (especially out-of-state facilities) towards developing enough resources, supports and services to meet the needs of all young people in their homes and communities, they would save money and achieve better outcomes. After all, anything that can be done in an institution can be done in communities, ***if they are properly resourced***.

If systems spent even one half of what they spend on institutional placement on community services, they would save money, achieve better outcomes and contribute to increasing public safety.

Systems can begin redirection by closing a wing of a facility and redirect those dollars to catalyze a community-based approach to safely caring for young people in their homes. Achieving initial short-term successes this way will help grow more opportunities to make a larger redirection by closing youth prisons.

POOL FUNDS
Juvenile justice systems should collaborate with other systems that are also serving justice-involved young people, such as child welfare, education and mental health agencies to pool resources. This could mean combining city, county, state, and Federal funds to establish a funding source to develop a robust neighborhood approach to serving all young people safely in the community. It could also mean tapping into available funding sources for young people in multiple systems.

FEDERAL FUNDING
States dictate much of how federal dollars get spent in their states, but funding for juvenile justice alternatives does exist through the Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Act, Title IVE waivers and Medicaid.

One key example of federal dollars that could support part of a continuum includes the new Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, which amended the Workforce Investment Act and was passed into law in 2014.[50] The new law requires that 75% of the young people served through this funding must be young people who are disconnected from school or work, including justice-involved youth.[51] The previous law required Workforce Investment Boards to serve only 30% of disconnected youth. The new law also expanded the age of young people served from 16-21 to 16-24.[52] Therefore, systems should consider working with local Workforce Investment Boards about funding part of a continuum in their communities.

PRIVATE DOLLARS
As states tighten budgets and balance priorities, private dollars are an increasingly important and attractive source of funding for systems that want to reduce youth incarceration. One example is insurance companies that are willing to fund community-based services to address myriad social needs as a means to reduce emergency room visits

related to gunshot wounds. This "wellness" model is intended to meet diverse needs of young people at risk of community violence. Similar initiatives are taking place to help medical patients with social service needs by linking them to community supports.[53]

Philanthropy can also play a unique role by providing "bridge money" to systems who want to redirect dollars from a facility to the community, but can't do it without an influx of money to support the transition. Bridge money is temporary and can facilitate youth prison closure that systems can eventually sustain through redirection.

Finally, Social Impact Bonds (SIB) or Pay for Success (PFS) programs are being used in more places in the US and around the world.[54] SIB/PFS models utilized an intermediary to leverage private dollars to achieve a designated social goal. Private investors get their dollars back once the designated metrics, e.g., reduced recidivism, have been met, and it is only after the states benchmarks are achieved that government pays for the services. This model of funding links performance and outcomes.[55]

Texas "YES" Waivers: Funding In-Home Mental Health Services

One way Texas helps to fund community-based services for young people with mental health diagnoses is through the Youth Empowerment Services or "YES" Waiver. The YES Waiver is a Home and Community-Based Services Medicaid Waiver that provides an array of intensive, community-based services in a wraparound model to youth, up to age 18, to reduce reliance on out-of-home placements.[56] The YES Waiver is intended to reduce psychiatric hospitalization, but the YES Waiver can also be used to keep young people with mental health diagnoses out of juvenile placements and psychiatric residential treatment facilities. Some probation departments in the Texas use the waiver to get young people help in their homes instead of sending them deeper into the juvenile justice system.

Since 65-70% of young people arrested each year have a mental health disorder, with 20-25% having a serious emotional disorder, the YES Waiver and other Home and Community-Based Services Waivers are an effective way to fund alternatives to out-of-home placements.[57]

Through the YES Waiver in Texas, community-based organizations provide an array of services to young people and their families including community living supports, paraprofessional services, family supports, in-home respite, adaptive aids and supports, minor home modifications, non-medical transportation, transitional services, out-of-home respite and specialized therapies, such as animal assisted therapy, art therapy and music therapy, among others.[58]

This waiver is an especially helpful funding source for systems that wish to build out support for community services and reduce reliance on youth incarceration because it is limited to people who would be subject to institutional care without the waiver. Instead of detaining young people because of their delinquent behavior, the YES Waiver enables jurisdictions to look at the possibility that the underlying cause of the delinquent behavior may be related to mental health or substance use, and refer young people to appropriate services and supports in the community. In addition, the YES Waiver must be cost-neutral, meaning that the costs of the community program or service cannot exceed the costs of institutional placement.[59]

 The YES Waiver program is also youth and family- driven, requiring an array of providers so that young people and their families have a choice of where and from whom they get the services they need within their communities.

CONCLUSION

In his book, *The Case for Belonging,* Peter Block writes,

> *We are a community of possibilities, not a community of problems. Community exists for the sake of belonging and takes its identity from the gifts, generosity, and accountability of its citizens. It is not defined by its fears, its isolation, or its penchant for retribution.*

Our young people are a big part of the community of possibilities. We can do better by them and for our communities, by ending the practice of youth confinement, closing youth prisons and developing resources for communities to be the place where young people belong.

It is time for us to see young people's behavior as an expression of needs that persist unmet. So as we meet **our** need to hold young people accountable, we also must work hard to meet **their** needs. What we advocate for here is a different approach, one that creates an array of services that reflects the guiding principles stated within and is designed to truly respond to our young people.

As a collaboration of community-based organizations, we see firsthand the promise and assets in our young people, their parents, their siblings, their grandparents and their fictive kin and neighbors. We know that isolation is not good for young people, and certainly not the best way to help them. Instead, like all of us, young people need inclusion, support that they can relate to and opportunities to grow and develop. And they need their families.

We hope this report will help communities, systems and families, with the guidance of directly impacted young people, to develop a vast array of services and supports in the community that eliminate the need for any young person to be incarcerated.

The National Collaboration for Youth

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