

TRAUMA-INFORMED JUVENILE JUSTICE DIVERSION

When youth are subject to practices within the justice system, they are at risk for exposure to additional trauma and psychological distress caused by:

- » **Physical restraint and seclusion**
- » **Restricted access to loved ones**
- » **Invasive strip searches and pat downs**



In addition, the juvenile justice system alone may impede the rehabilitation potential of trauma survivors, as there is a significant positive association between exposure to harsh punishments while incarcerated and continued criminal behavior post-release.ⁱ

50-75% of the youth entering the **juvenile justice** system has a **diagnosable mental health condition**ⁱⁱ

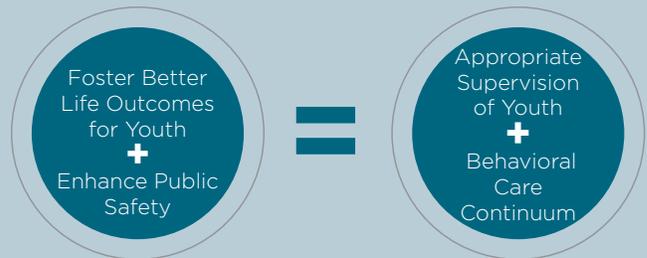
2 MILLION American youth are arrested every year

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is commonly found in youth within juvenile justice systemⁱⁱⁱ

90% of the youth

are reported a history of exposure to at least one potentially traumatic event^{iv}

How to return productive adult citizens to the community?



STEPS FOR SYSTEM-LEVEL SOLUTION

Embedding trauma-informed approaches in the juvenile justice system will likely require a systems change. Agencies should identify a champion to manage these processes, e.g. those whose primary responsibilities are with juveniles.

Cross-collaboration among community members, including health professionals, police officers, educators, and families is key to trauma-informed care providing maximal outcomes.

Formal agreements clearly outlining roles and responsibilities of involved parties set forth an effective cross-system policy framework, especially for agencies serving overlapping populations.

Effective information and data sharing allows care team members, the youth, and family/caregivers to have a mutual understanding of the youth's strengths and needs.

As there is no dedicated source of funding for the design and implementation of trauma-informed care, financial support such as grants needs to be obtained to cover the services for indigent families and juveniles without health insurance.



KEY APPROACHES FOR YOUTH'S DELINQUENT BEHAVIOR:

Collaborative and Trustworthy Environment

When working with youth involved in the juvenile justice system, it is important for staff to encourage open and honest communication to find a mutually agreeable arrangement.



The atmosphere of agency offices should be safe and non-threatening and avoid exacerbating the power differential staff and youth. This promotes an indication of the inappropriateness of the action in a firm but calm manner.



Youth Empowerment

Amplifying youth voices and empowering youth to participate in the decision-making process can have resoundingly positive impacts on the efficacy of trauma- diversion programs. Approaches for youth engagement include:

- » Foster a safe and supportive atmosphere, including using motivational interview techniques to assure that they feel protected
- » Allow the youth to share their story, validate their experiences, and recognize the courage it takes to share
- » Implement calming strategies to regulate the youth's emotions

EMBRACE COMPREHENSIVE CONTINUUM OF CARE

Care must be continuous until the person is rehabilitated to function without ongoing support.

Practitioners should take special precaution to avoid gaps in care, provide comprehensive treatment, and include appropriate therapeutic modalities, family approaches, and psycho-pharmacological intervention.

PREVENTION

Work with trauma-informed care systems and community coalitions to raise awareness of childhood violence and Adverse Childhood Experiences and emphasize the necessity of child protection.

SCREENING

Traumatic event exposure and trauma symptomatology
Integrate screening for traumatic event exposure into existing mental health and substance use screening procedures to streamline the process and maintain a reasonable staff workload.

ASSESSMENT

Utilize multiple evaluation tools to review youth's history of the exposure, identify symptoms and their impact on life functioning, resulting in a care plan to meet the needs.

EFFECTIVE TREATMENT METHODS

Incorporate strategies for addressing poly-victimization and complex traumas should be utilized while determining utilized while determining treatment needs.

CONTINUED SUPPORTS FOLLOWING DISCHARGE FROM CARE.

Help youth understand the importance of a follow-up appointment. They also many need additional supports in other areas of life, connecting them with resources is critical. This may include supports in their home or at school.



References

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