



Performance-based
Standards



Measuring Positive Youth Development

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Introduction

Why Measure Positive Youth Development

A confluence of events are coming together that make now the right time to start measuring positive youth outcomes:

- Over the past couple of decades, juvenile justice systems have changed the way they approach youths, moving away from deficit-based and punishment-oriented strategies to practices that promote youths' strengths and healthy adolescent development;
- Research continues to support positive youth development frameworks, strategies and interventions to help youths make successful transitions to adulthood and hold them accountable for wrongdoing (National Research Council, 2013);
- Progressive agencies and leaders are implementing positive youth development philosophies, policies and practices; and
- The new way of thinking about juvenile justice youths as developing adolescents has sparked demands for measures other than recidivism to reflect progress youths make while in custody that are timely, meaningful and reflective of services provided.

Working with state correctional agency directors, facility leaders and staff, Performance-based Standards (PbS) created the PbS Positive Youth Outcomes Report with two goals: 1) Promote, expand and support agency/facility management practices that treat youths as developing adolescents and 2) Provide data for agencies and facilities to assess the immediate impact of positive youth development approaches and make strategic decisions, resource allocations and practice changes that align with research.

The report is being pilot tested by PbS participants this fall. It is the result of the collaboration of PbS, the Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators' Positive Youth Outcomes Committee and leaders and staff at the Oregon Youth Authority and Massachusetts Department of Youth Services. PbS selected existing outcome measures for pilot testing and will solicit feedback continuously from participants as they use the report.

This issue brief highlights aggregate PbS outcome measure data included in the PbS Positive Youth Outcomes Report. It shows gains youths made working toward longer-term goals of educational achievements, employment, healthy relationships, personal health and preparedness to return to the community. By drawing attention to what is measurable, PbS hopes to further the integration of positive youth development in juvenile justice agencies and facilities' operations, services and practices.

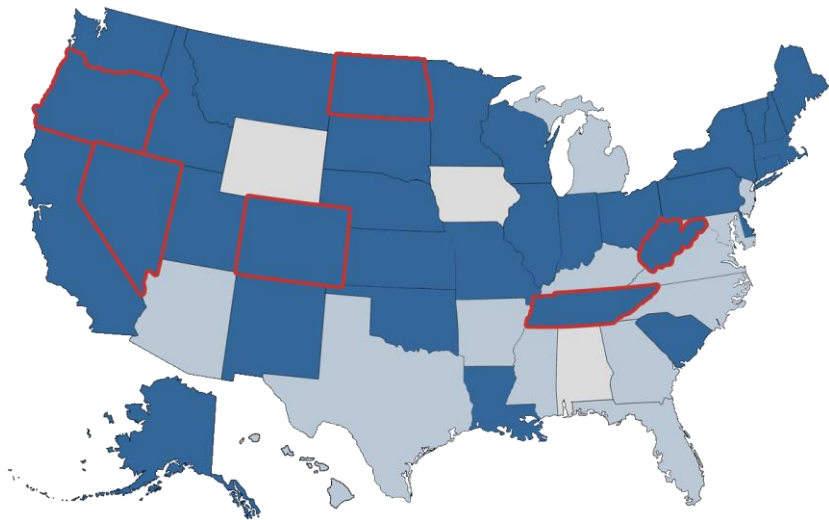


Methodology

PbS is a data-driven improvement model grounded in research that holds juvenile justice agencies, facilities and residential care providers to the highest standards for operations, programs and services. PbS was launched 20 years ago by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) to address the safety, health and quality of life issues reported in the 1994 Conditions of Confinement Study. Over time, PbS has uniquely established national standards to guide operations and uniformed performance outcome measures to continuously, accurately and comprehensively monitor daily practices and cultures within youth facilities.

The power of PbS' improvement model is being used increasingly not only to manage facilities on a daily basis and improve outcomes for youths but also to bring existing facility practices and approaches into alignment with the most recent research on adolescent development.

Almost 200 facilities and programs participate in PbS in 34 states and report quantitative data from administrative forms, incident reports and youth records as well as qualitative data from surveys of youths, staff and families every April and October. PbS uses this data to provide PbS participants with outcome measure reports on a variety of areas including safety, order, security, health, behavioral health, family, justice, programming and reintegration. This report provides the aggregate data on selected outcome measures relating to positive youth development.



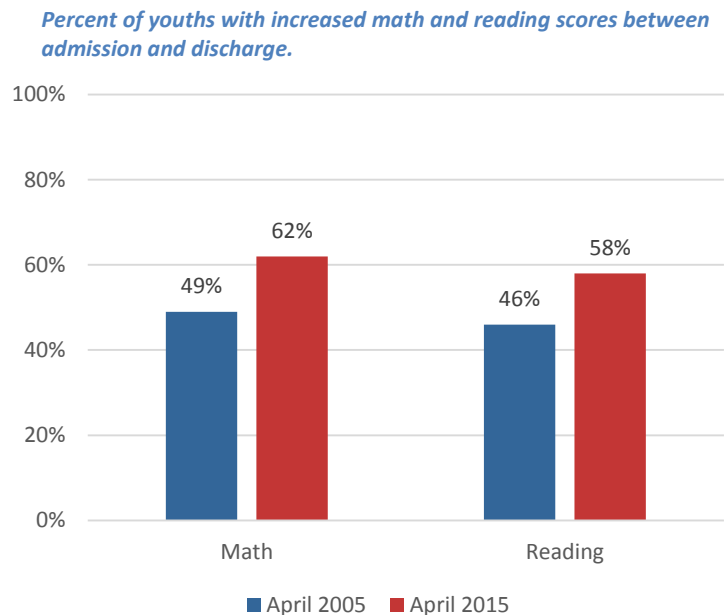
States in dark blue currently participate in PbS. States highlighted in red have new facilities joining for the upcoming October 2015 data collection.



Education and Work

Research has shown that juvenile programs that offer skill building (e.g. academic and vocational skill building) are particularly effective for recidivism reduction (Lipsey, Howell, Kelly, Chapman & Carver, 2010). Over the past several years, PbS- participating facilities have seen improvements in educational scores while youths are at the facility and a high percentage of youths completing the curriculums.

- More than half of youths (58%) who were confined for more than six months improved their reading scores between admission and discharge, the most youths to improve their scores to date. In April 2005, only 46% of youths improved their reading scores.
- Slightly more youths improved their math scores between admission and discharge (62%). Like reading scores, the percentage is at its highest. In April 2005, 49% of youths showed higher scores.
- About 68% of youths who were confined for more than 60 days completed a vocational skills curriculum. This is an increase from 48% in April 2005 and has been consistently higher over the past couple of data collections.
- The same percentage of youths (68%) completed the health curriculum. In April 2005, only 50% of youths completed it.
- When compared to the other curriculums, the psychosocial/ social skills curriculum had the highest percentage of completion at 74%. Only 51% of youths completed it in April 2005 and 71% in April 2010.



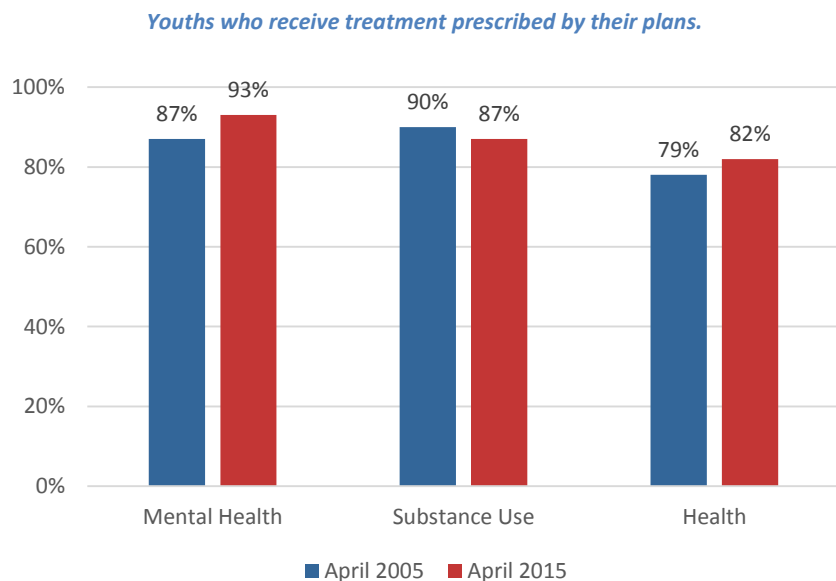
Health and Behavioral Health Treatment

The positive youth development approach posits that all youths will mature positively when connected with the appropriate services, opportunities, supports and relationships. PbS facilities document and report assessments completed for each individual youths' strengths and needs and if the appropriate services are received.



The vast majority of youths in PbS facilities who were confined more than 60 days received the health treatment, mental health treatment and substance use treatment prescribed by their individual treatment plans.

- In April 2015, 93% of youths received mental health treatment. The percentage of youths who received mental health treatment has been steadily increasing since April 2005.
- In April 2015, 87% received substance use treatment as identified as needed in their individual treatment plans. This is slightly less than the percentage who received substance use treatment in April 2005 (90%).
- Out of the three treatment areas, the fewest youths (82%) received health treatment in April 2015. Like mental health treatment, there has been an increase since April 2005—79% of youths received health treatment then.



Relationships

Research highlights the importance of family visitation and contact for youths in custody and can influence whether they re-offend upon release (Agudelo, 2013). The family outcome measures are a recent addition to PbS, yet the results are positive: a large percentage of youths reported family visits and phone contact and most family members reported positive relationships with staff.

- Over two-thirds of youths (68%) have had visits with parents or guardians while in the facility. Even more (94%) have had phone contact.
- Staff contacted family members via email, phone or visit an average of 4.66 times during the last month of confinement.
- Nearly all family members (95%) report that staff value their opinions regarding their child's rehabilitation.



Community

Community involvement helps youths feel accepted, offers role models, provides opportunities for learning and creates a sense of community. Creative community engagement includes volunteers and events and activities such as field days and art and musical shows for the public. Volunteers also can help educate the larger community about what goes on at the facility, increase public understanding of the youths and serve as advocates for facility needs at the state and local levels.¹ PbS data shows that facilities are successfully increasing volunteer and community engagement:

- In April 2015, there was approximately one volunteer providing programming for each youth in the facility. The number of community volunteers providing programming has increased by 171% since April 2005.
- Around 40% of facility programs engaged community volunteers in April 2015. The percentage of facility programs engaging community volunteers has ranged from 30% to 46%.

Preparedness

A primary tenant of positive youth development for juvenile justice residential programs is to minimally interrupt a youth's journey to adulthood and prepare him or her for returning to family and community through opportunities to acquire education and employment skills, develop social and relationship proficiencies and practice setting personal goals and making responsible choices without adult supervision. Both youths and families need to be prepared for a youth's return home as youths usually rely on families for housing, support and connection to continuing services (diZerega & Verdone, 2011). PbS surveys of youths and families show facilities' performance in meeting the needs of both youths and families for youths' transition home.

- Most youths (91%) were accepted/admitted to at least one community service/agency program prior to their release. April 2014 saw the highest percentage of youths (93%) being accepted/admitted; up from its lowest in October 2008 at 84%.
- Not as many youths (72%) know they are going to a community service/agency program upon release. This is still an increase from its lowest in April 2012 at 58%.
- The average rate of contacts youths have with their aftercare manager has decreased by 40% when compared to 10 years ago in April 2005. However, there has been a steady upward trend over the past five years—since April 2010, the average rate of contacts has increased by 72%.
- Nearly all youths (94%) who are confined for more than 30 days have a written individual treatment plan, signed by the youth and a staff member.

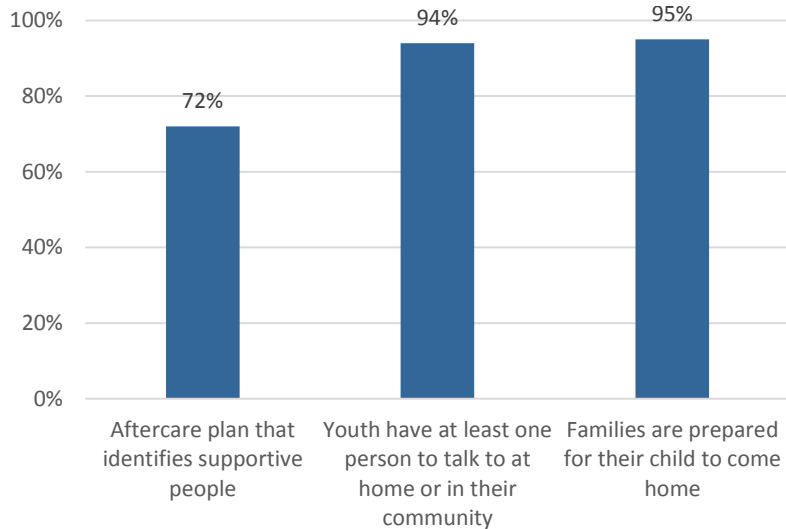
¹ For information about the success of volunteers and mentors, read Community Coordinator Believes Volunteers Are Key in Helping Juvenile Offenders at <http://www.readperiodicals.com/201206/2724043081.html>





- Almost three-quarters (72%) of youths have aftercare plans that include the identification of people who will support youths in the community.
- Even if the aftercare plans do not identify people who support youths, youths still know who to go to: Nearly all (94%) youths say they have at least one person at home or in their community they will talk to when they need to talk or need help working out a problem.
- Nearly all family members (95%) report that they are prepared for their child to come home.
- While over three quarters (78%) of youths achieved a higher levelⁱ by the time they were released from the facility, effective behavior management systems are still a struggle: The percentage of youths who achieved a higher level by the time they were released has declined over the past three data collections, from 88% of youths in April 2014.

Youth and family preparedness for youth's return to the community.



References

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Lipsey, M., Howell, J., Kelly, M., Chapman, G. & Carver, D. (2010). Improving the Effectiveness of Juvenile Justice Programs. Washington, DC: Center for Juvenile Justice Reform.

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ⁱ "Level" refers to the facility behavior management system that guides youths to progressively assume more responsibility for their behavior and opportunities for independence to prepare them for release. Behavior management systems have many different names such as a phase system or points system.

