



Performance-based
Standards



First Step to Integrate Trauma- Informed Care: Ask Youths

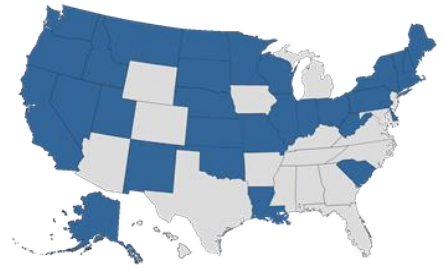
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PbS Learning Institute, Inc.
639 Granite Street, Suite 112
Braintree, MA 02184
<http://pbstandards.org>

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Integrating Trauma-Informed Care into Performance-based Standards

Performance-based Standards (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), US Department of Justice, to address the safety, health and quality of life issues reported in the 1994 Conditions of Confinement Study. Over time, PbS uniquely has established national standards to guide operations and uniform performance outcome measures to continuously, accurately and comprehensively monitor daily practices and cultures within youth facilities.



States with participating facilities and programs are shown in blue.

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. Numerous studies over the past 20 years have shown that most youths involved in the juvenile justice system have been exposed to violence and suffer from some form of trauma and traumatic stress. The estimates range from 75 percent to 93 percent and show that girls have a greater likelihood of exposure than boys (Abrams et al., 2004, Ford et al., 2007, 2012). Research from the human development field demonstrates that traumatic experiences frequently interfere with healthy child development and can affect a child's emotional management and response to stress long after the initial exposure (McEwen, 2008; Perry, 2008; Shonkoff & Garner, 2012). The Report of the Attorney General's National Task Force on Children Exposed to Violence (2012) takes this research into account and recommends focusing on making trauma-informed screening, assessment and care the standard in juvenile justice services.

In 2013 PbS was invited to take the first step to implement the recommendations and research. The Maine Department of Corrections, Division of Juvenile Services (DJS), asked PbS to join them and their partners THRIVE, the local system of care provider and Hornby Zeller Associates, Inc. (HZA), a social science research firm with expertise in juvenile justice, to develop a way to use PbS' improvement model to deepen and sustain Maine's efforts to change practices, training and approaches to youths to be sensitive and responsive to trauma. Using the experience and expertise in Maine, PbS and its partners launched an initiative to integrate trauma-informed care into PbS for all participants. This issue brief presents the results of the first step completed in April 2014: asking youths about their experiences and perceptions of being treated using trauma-informed practices.



PbS and the Maine Division of Juvenile Services

In 2012 the state of Maine received a grant from the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to expand its trauma-informed system of care approach to the Department of Corrections, Division of Juvenile Services (DJS). Through a previous system of care grant, Maine had developed a trauma-informed taxonomy for classifying best practices within a mental health agency setting and produced the Trauma Informed Agency Assessment (TIAA) to determine the level of trauma-informed practice within an agency and pinpoint areas for improvement. DJS' leadership worked with the local system of care grantee, THRIVE, to adapt the instrument for the two Maine youth development centers. The assessments were conducted, data was collected, trainings were held and DJS launched a major initiative to ensure its facilities were implementing the research-based best practices in trauma-informed care. DJS' leadership also recognized they needed a way to sustain the good work beyond the current grant.

Since 2008 Maine's youth development centers have been implementing the PbS data-driven improvement model, collecting information to identify, monitor and improve conditions and treatment services provided to youths in custody. DJS recognized that PbS could provide the structure to sustain the work and ensure trauma-informed philosophy, approaches and practices were embedded in the facilities' culture. DJS invited PbS to join the initiative. PbS jumped aboard whole-heartedly and set out to develop a module for trauma-informed care that would benefit all PbS participants across the country.



In April 2014, the collaborative took the first step and added 10 new trauma-informed care-related questions to the PbS Youth Climate Survey, based on pilot testing and analysis in Maine. PbS shares the first national results about youths' perceptions of the current level of trauma-informed care in residential facilities and programs in this issue brief. The information offers baseline data to begin work to increase and deepen the positive impacts of integrating trauma-informed care into youth facility practices.



Methodology

Almost 200 facilities and programs participate in PbS in 32 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. The PbS Youth Climate Survey asks 60 questions about facility conditions, climate, services, contacts with family and community and staff-youth relationships; the survey is administered to a minimum random sample of 30 youths at each facility. The 10 new trauma-informed care-related questions were integrated into the PbS Youth Climate Survey for the first time in April 2014 and responded to by a total of 4,361 youths. Most of the responding youths (59%) were in long-term correction facilities. An additional 19 percent were in short-term detention centers, six percent in assessment centers and 16 percent were at community-based programs.

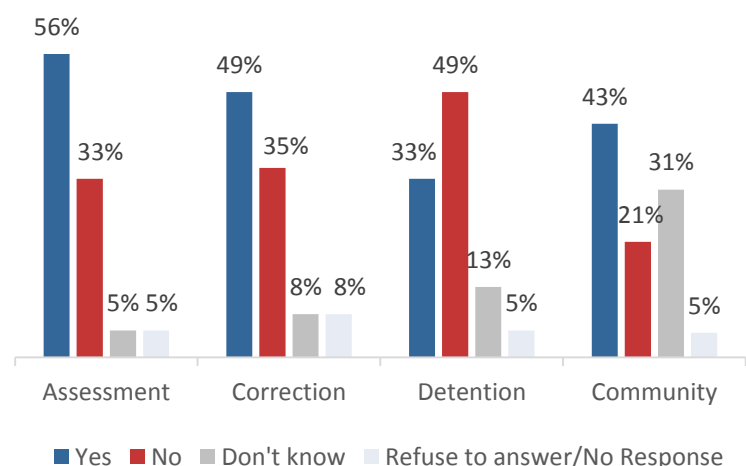
What the Youths Said

Not quite half of the youths said someone explained what trauma is and why it matters but slightly more than half said someone had asked them if any bad or upsetting things had happened to them.

Two questions added to the PbS Youth Climate Survey asked about the facility's trauma competency, giving leaders information about how the concept of trauma was being shared with and understood by the youths.

- Forty-six percent (46%) of the total youths surveyed reported that someone from the facility explained to them what trauma is and why it mattered. Table 1 shows more than half of the youths in assessment centers reported positively while slightly less than half at the other facility types.
- Slightly more than half (53%) reported that someone from the facility had asked them if any bad or upsetting things had ever happened to them.

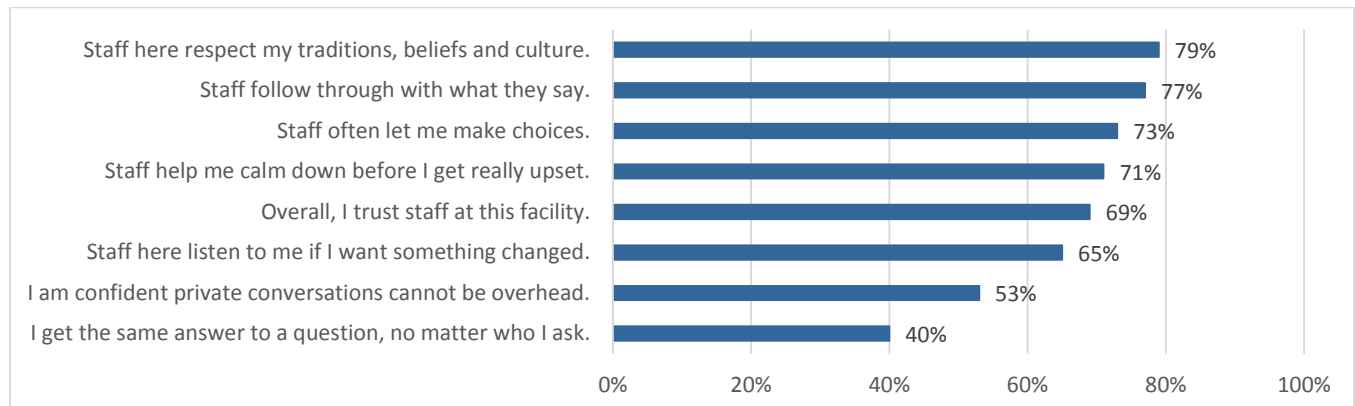
Table 1: Has someone from the facility explained to you what trauma is and why it matters?



Most youths said they trust staff and reflected positively on how staff treated them but nearly half of the youths showed concerns that their private conversations could not be overheard.

The remaining eight new trauma-informed care-related questions added to the PbS Youth Climate Survey focused on the youths’ perceptions of how they are treated by staff. Table 2 shows the largest percentage (79%) of youths felt staff respected their traditions, beliefs and culture while smaller percentages (53%) felt confident private conversations cannot be overheard and (40%) felt they get the same answer to a question no matter what. More than 70 percent felt staff follow through with what they say, let the youths make choices and help youths calm down. Slightly less reported that they trust staff and they felt staff listened to them if they wanted something changed.

*Table 2: Youths’ perceptions of staff treatment.**



**The original publication of the issue brief reported that 75% of the youths responding answered “yes” to the question “I get the same answer to a question, no matter who I ask.” The correct percentage is 40.*

As PbS helps facilities focus on making trauma-informed screening, assessment and care the standard in juvenile justice services, the results of these trauma-informed care-related survey questions provide a baseline for facilities and programs to see the impact that staff are having on youths, how youths feel in the facilities and programs and also highlight areas where facilities can improve the youths’ experiences. As PbS participants make strides in this area, these survey results are an informative way to see that progress. Next, PbS is working to integrate additional survey questions to gain data from families and staff.



PbS Issue Brief Series

PbS is committed to treating all youths in custody as one of our own and providing national standards, outcome measures, a quality assurance process, expert coaching, training and technical assistance to all facilities and leaders to help implement research-based and developmentally-appropriate best practices. For more information or to join, please visit: <http://pbstandards.org>.

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