



# Perspective July 2017

*A biannual snapshot of the conditions of confinement and quality of life in residential facilities for young offenders.*

## Introduction

Performance-based Standards (PbS) is a data-driven improvement model that challenges juvenile justice agencies to continually meet the highest standards for residential care of youths. Launched in 1995 by the US Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), PbS sets standards for safety, rehabilitation services, programming, reentry and family connection. PbS measures and monitors facility practices by collecting and reporting data from administrative records and survey responses from youths, staff and families to provide a holistic picture of the conditions and quality of life in residential facilities, highlights the practices that are effective in promoting youths' healthy maturation and identifies those that are not. PbS trains staff to use the information to change practices and support reforms implementing the adolescent development approach.

PbS data is reported every April and October. In April 2017, 223 facilities in 35 states participated: 127 correction, 50 detention, 15 assessment and 31 community residential programs. The PbS Perspective July 2017 shares some of the aggregate data from April 2017 related to family engagement that research shows are essential to reducing recidivism and ensuring a youth's success.

## Promoting Family Connections

In 2012, PbS developed the only set of national facility standards promoting meaningful family engagement that creates a partnership between facility staff and families to best serve youths in custody. PbS worked with the Vera Institute of Justice to identify and measure practices that research shows leads to maintaining and strengthening youths' connection to family, supports youths' rehabilitation while in facilities and results in lower recidivism when they leave.<sup>1</sup>

There are four Family standards: families and social supports are identified and engaged in youths' rehabilitation; families and social supports are valued and treated as partners in youth's rehabilitation; families and social supports assist with and actively participate in the design and implementation of youth's treatment plans and programming; and all youths have plans, skills and strategies that

draw on relationships for problem solving and achieving goals.

In April 2017, PbS collected 5,436 Youth Climate Surveys from youths at correction, detention and assessment facilities. The responses showed not quite two-thirds (60%) of youths in correction facilities reported their family felt welcome at the facility and about half of the youths in detention (54%) and assessment (53%) reported the same.

The PbS Family Survey is given to families of all youths being released from correction facilities and to families of youths in detention and assessment centers when they visit. In April 2017, PbS collected 1,137 family surveys from correction facilities and 542 from detention and assessment centers. Most of the families (91%) of youths in correction and detention and 90% in assessment reported they "strongly agree" or "agree" they felt welcomed at the facility.

<sup>1</sup>Agudelo, S. (2013). The Impact of Family Visitation on Incarcerated Youth Behavior and School Performance. New York, NY: Vera Institute of Justice. Retrieved from [www.vera.org](http://www.vera.org)

## Creating Valued Relationships

Family member representatives who helped develop PbS' family standards were very clear that facility staff need to go beyond engaging family members to treating them as valued, active partners in their child's rehabilitation. PbS asks similar questions of family members, facility staff and youths about their relationships to gauge different perspectives.

Most families (87%) of youths in correction facilities said staff valued their opinions regarding their child's rehabilitation and 81% of families of youths in detention and assessment centers similarly reported that staff value their opinions regarding their child's care.

Similarly, more than three-quarters (80%) of 6,710 staff surveyed in April 2017 reported they value youths' family and social supports as partners working with the youths. About two-thirds (67%) of staff said they have better results working with youths when families are included.

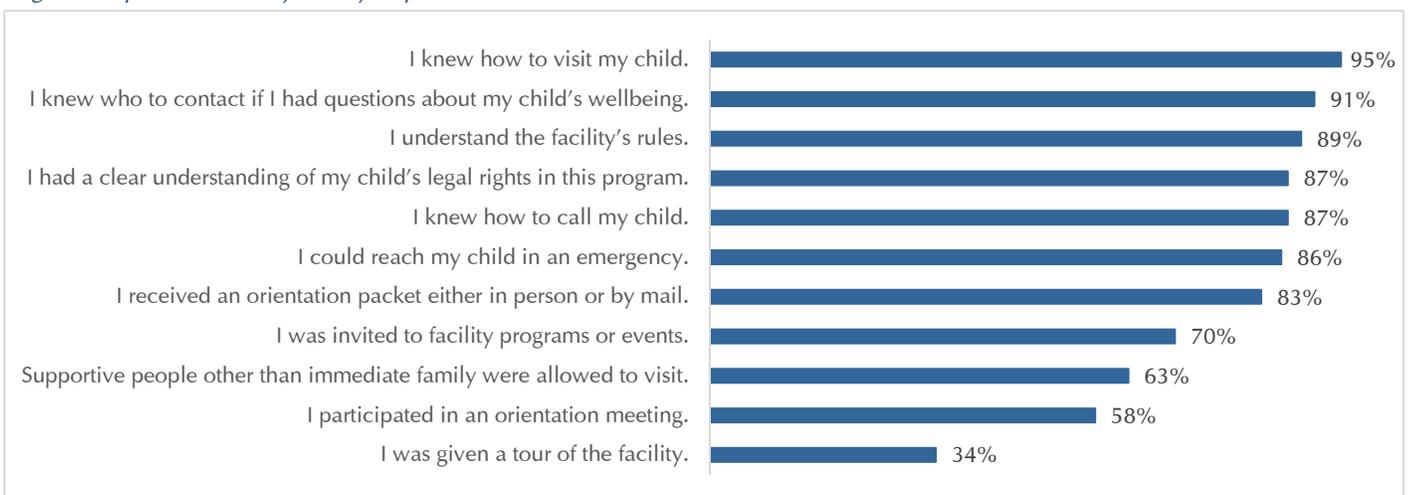
Youths were less positive about staff being interested in what their families have to say (64%).

## Involving Families in Treatment and Discharge Planning

Research shows that involving family in the treatment planning process is essential for a youth's success.<sup>2</sup> About three-quarters (76%) of families of youths in correction facilities reported they participated in the development of their child's treatment plan. Of those, 98% reported they understood, agreed with and complied with the treatment plan. Of the youths who reported they have a treatment or service plan, 87% agreed they were involved in talking about what should go in the plan and 92% agreed the plan helps them to understand what they must do in order to reach their goals. Most youths (79%) agreed the programming they attend at the facility is helping them to understand what they need to do to succeed when they return home.

A majority of families (83%) also reported participating in their child's aftercare or discharge plan. Of those who did, nearly all (97%) said they understood the plan, 96% agreed with the plan and 97% said they were able to comply with the plan. (See Figure 1 for additional Family Survey responses.)

Figure 1: April 2017 Family Survey responses from correction facilities



<sup>2</sup>diZerega, M. and Verdone, J. (2011). "Setting an Agenda for Family-Focused Justice Reform." New York, NY: Vera Institute of Justice.