



Performance-*based*
Standards



Family-Youth Initiative

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PbS Family-Youth Initiative: Uniting Facilities and Families

The historic wall separating residential programs and facilities for young offenders and the youths' families is coming down. Thanks to research, innovative leaders and brave individuals, the two groups of adults who share the common hope that youths grow up to be successful citizens now see themselves as partners rather than problems and are working together to achieve the best outcomes for the youths. Across the country, facility leaders and family members are breaking down the old myths and misperceptions that kept the two groups at odds and are building up shared resources, training and best practices. PbS, in collaboration with the Vera Institute of Justice, Family Justice Program, launched the Family-Youth Initiative (FYI) to lead, promote and guide the new wave of facility-family partnership. Through FYI, PbS developed standards, best practices and outcomes for the highest quality facility-family relationships to add to PbS' national standards and continuous improvement program. FYI is also creating and contributing resources and training for juvenile justice professionals to successfully and meaningfully engage families in rehabilitation and reentry work.

FYI is changing the way juvenile facilities interact with families. The first juvenile institutions were intended to serve wayward, orphaned, and runaway youths and youths whose parents had committed crimes, abuse or other societal faux pas. The system believed it served the best interest of the child and like child welfare, intentionally kept parents and families away. As America increased its reliance on facilities to respond to delinquency, the population of incarcerated youths changed: most came from families who wanted to know what happened when their child was locked up. However the facilities lacked understanding, experience and tools to know how to best respond. PbS provides facility leaders with a blueprint to create meaningful relationships with families. PbS was developed by the Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators (CJCA) in 1995 to improve and monitor the quality of life and conditions of confinement in youth facilities. PbS standards establish the highest expectations for facility operations, services and youths' daily experiences. PbS trains and supports participants to collect data, analyze the results and use information to reform and change practices to best serve youths, staff, families and communities.

PbS addresses eight areas of facility management: safety, security, order, health/mental health, programming, reintegration, justice and beginning in 2012, family and social supports. PbS collects both quantitative and qualitative data from administrative forms, youth records, incident reports, exit interviews of youths and surveys of youths, staff and families. The information indicates how well facilities meet PbS' standards and commitment to treating all youths in custody as one of our own. In 2004 PbS won the Innovation in American Government Award for uniquely and effectively improving conditions of confinement in youth facilities.

Creating the New Normal

FYI unites two successful organizations and approaches to working with incarcerated youths and their families for successful reentry after incarceration:

- The PbS Learning Institute, (PbS Li), committed to treating all youths in custody as one of our own through implementation of national standards, best practices and continuous monitoring with quantitative and qualitative data; and
- The Family Justice Program (FJP) of the Vera Institute of Justice, developers of the Juvenile Relational Inquiry Tool (JRIT), which leverages staff experience to identify youths' strengths and family and social support, and draws on those resources to improve youths' release and reentry supports.

The PbS – Vera collaboration models the meaningful partnership and shared dedication to positive outcomes for youths that FYI hopes will become the “new normal” for juvenile facilities and families.

The current movement in juvenile justice to reform the approaches and practices used to engage families while youths are in residential placement is largely the result of research and national education efforts. Vera's research has made clear how important families are to a youth's successful reentry: families are the most frequent provider of housing and the most common source of financial support; families help secure jobs and child care. Family involvement has been shown to result in better employment outcomes and reductions in the use of alcohol and other drugs. Family-oriented approaches to changing behavior have been shown to not only reduce recidivism rates for youths in the justice system (compared to other models of treatment), but to result in lower rates of system involvement for their siblings.¹

Three recently-released reports helped the field to better understand what families with youths in the juvenile justice system experience, need and want:

“Family Comes First,” by the Campaign for Youth Justice, includes family and system perspectives, a practical list of steps to support families and existing model approaches;

“Safety, Fairness, Stability: Repositioning Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare to Engage Families and Communities,” by the Center for Juvenile Justice Reform at Georgetown University, offers recommendations to improve family engagement in juvenile justice and child welfare systems; and

“Families Unlocking Futures: Solutions to the Crisis in Juvenile Justice,” by Justice for Families and the DataCenter, includes data from focus groups, a media and literature review that concludes families are capable, care and want to be involved in juvenile justice.

FYI Development

Building on the momentum for reform, FYI convened a national Advisory Board comprised of representatives from families, facilities and research. The group met in June 2011 and crafted a goal for the new PbS section called “Family and Social Supports” and four standards to guide facility practices to best work with families. The Advisory Board also drafted questions for a new PbS Family Survey for families of youths in facilities and helped the FYI team map out a pilot testing strategy. Lastly, the Advisory Board urged FYI to adopt a broad definition of family to establish a consistent understanding among juvenile justice professionals that “family” includes all blood relatives and those living within the same home or dwelling as the youth and “social supports” include all adult non-relatives who are positive role models.

Since 1995, PbS has set goals that provide practitioners guidance and direction for daily decisions and work to inspire them to provide the highest quality of life and services for youths. Creating a new section of PbS with a unique goal and standards for relationships and interactions with families makes clear that families are just as important to facility operations as safety, health and quality of life. Like all PbS goals, the new family goal is written for continuous improvement; not a pass/fail judgment but an expectation of excellence facilities continually strive to achieve. The PbS family and Social Supports goal is:

“To engage and collaborate with families and people who support youths while youths are in custody.”

To meet the goal, FYI developed four standards for facilities that, when met, will lead to positive outcomes and best practices for working with families:

1. Families and people who support youths are identified and engaged in youths’ rehabilitation.
2. Families and people who support youths are treated and valued as partners in youths’ rehabilitation.
3. Families and people who support youths assist with and actively participate in the design and implementation of youths’ treatment plans and programming.
4. All youths have plans, skills and strategies that draw on relationships for problem-solving and achieving goals.

FYI Advisory Board Members:

Jeffrey Butts, John Jay College of Criminal Justice

Laura Dolan, Ohio Dept. of Youth Services

Zachary Norris, Justice for Families

Cassie Reynolds, Kentucky Dept. of Juvenile Justice

Liane Rozzell, Families & Allies of Virginia’s Youth

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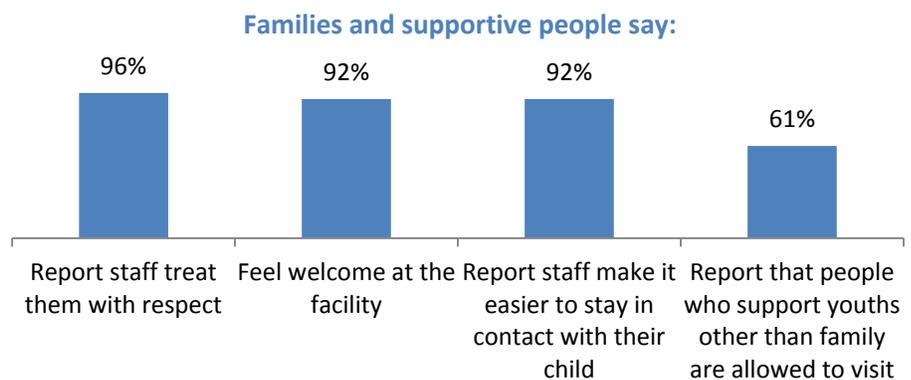
PbS Family Survey

PbS is a unique tool for youth facilities because in addition to setting national standards and providing a blueprint of best practices to achieve the standards, PbS requires continuous reporting and monitoring to track outcomes indicating how well a facility is meeting the standards. Nearly 200 facilities in 31 states volunteer to participate and share PbS' commitment to treating all youths in custody as one of our own. For the new Family and Social Supports section, most of the information comes from the new PbS Family Survey.

Completing the PbS Family Survey is voluntary and the responses are kept confidential and anonymous. The survey asks about the families' experiences with facility orientation and welcome, visiting and contact, treatment planning and communication and discharge planning. It takes a family member between three and 15 minutes to complete. The survey can be given in person, via mail or email or be conducted over the phone or by community staff.

The families' responses are reported back to facilities every November (for surveys completed between May 1 – Oct. 31) and May (for surveys completed between Nov. 1 – April 30) along with all other PbS information. The PbS Family Survey has been administered since 2012 and as of January 2014, PbS has collected 1,500 surveys with a 90% participation rate. In 2014, 49 correction facilities in 18 states are surveying families.

Some of the answers reported in November 2013 are presented in the chart below.



The purpose of the information is to change, reform and improve practices. PbS participants have already used information from the families to

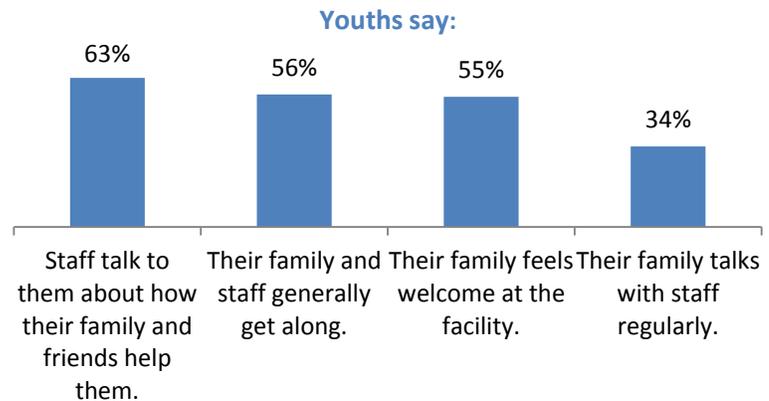
provide more information when youths are admitted, open doors for tours and visitation and enhance the opportunities for families to participate in treatment planning. One facility changed its visitation policy from one day per week to whenever a family member requests to visit.

Additional PbS Family Data

PbS collects information about visitation and treatment planning through administrative data and youth records and PbS surveys youths and staff about the role families play and the relationship between facilities and families. The mix of quantitative and qualitative information provides a rich,

meaningful understanding of the relationships between family, staff and youth and the depth of family involvement, engagement and communication.

In November 2013, more than half of the youths surveyed said staff members talk to them about their family and social supports; at the same time, the vast majority of staff (92%) said they talk to youths about family and social supports and most staff (76%) value family as partners. The perspectives of youths, staff and families give facilities information otherwise not available and the PbS continuous improvement process gives them the ability to create and track improvements to relationships with families.



More than half of the youths surveyed say that staff members talk to them about their family and social supports; at the same time, the vast majority of staff (92%) say they talk to youths about family and social supports and most (76%) value them as partners. The FYI provides perspectives from the youths, staff and families and social supports to give facilities the knowledge and the ability to track improvements on the relationship between facilities and social supports. As facilities implement research-based methods to integrate families and social supports in the youth's rehabilitation, this information is invaluable.



¹ diZerega, M. and Verdone, J. "Setting an Agenda for Family-Focused Justice Reform." May 2011 Vera Institute of Justice.

PbS Issue Brief Series

PbS believes that youths deserve to be treated as individuals with strengths and needs, within the context of their families, and PbS is committed to treating all youths in custody as one of our own as the best approach to rehabilitation. PbS provides national standards, outcome measures, a quality assurance process, training and technical assistance to all facilities and leaders to help implement research-based and best practices. For more information, please visit: pbstandards.org.