



COVID-19 Data Snapshot

Focus on Positive Change

February 2021

Fewer restraints, better staff-youth relationships

The COVID-19 pandemic has served as a catalyst for some much-needed changes in juvenile justice. There are fewer youths in custody and the conditions and the quality of life in many facilities is improving. Juvenile justice agencies have become nimble, flexible and highly communicative to respond to the needs of youths and staff in order to face the daily challenges. Now is the time to learn about — and build on — these positive changes.

This PbS COVID-19 Snapshot focuses two pieces of data that changed for the better with:

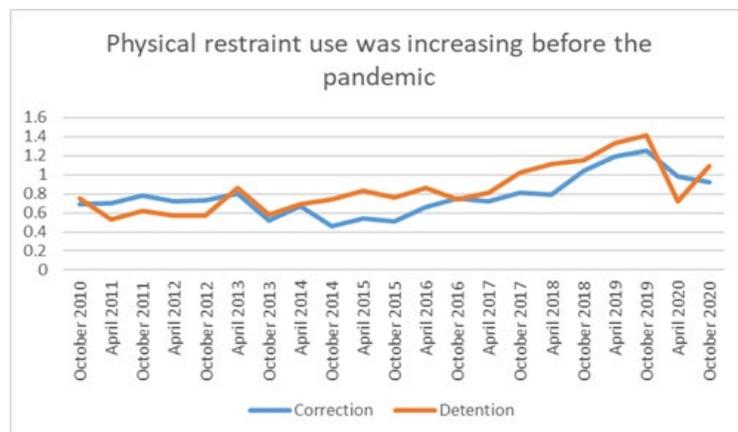
- 1) Fewer uses of restraints in facilities
- 2) More youths reporting positively about staff

Restraints are various types of interventions that should be used minimally and as a last resort to protect youths from harming themselves or others. Their use is normally an indication that a facility's behavior management system has broken down. Research has proven that the use of restraints has an independent negative affect on facility climate and safety and is ineffective in preventing future misbehavior. To avoid the need for restraints, many agencies have focused their efforts on improving staff and youth relationships and provided trainings on strategies to engage young people, adolescent development and relationship-building techniques. Despite these efforts, until the pandemic hit the rate of restraints usage was steadily climbing.

In October 2020, at the peak of COVID-19, the rate of physical restraint use dropped by 26% in correction facilities and 23% in detention centers from October 2019.

The PbS data provided comes from 150728 incident reports from 313 facilities in 44 states and the D.C. district reported since 2010. It shows the total number of physical restraints used during the months of October and April and is presented as a

rate to accurately aggregate the data and compare small, medium and large facilities. Physical restraints are the most common type of restraints in these facilities. October 2020's data also shows that other types of restraints, including mechanical and chemical, were used less frequently.



Staff in almost one-third of PbS facilities did not use any physical restraints in October 2020.

Also in October 2020, more youths reported favorable perceptions and feelings about staff. The PbS Youth Climate Survey indicates most youths speak favorably of staff — usually between 70-80% — in relation to fairness, caring, safety and respect. This has stayed fairly consistent over the years, which is meaningful, and the small percentage increases in positive responses in October 2020 were across the board.

The data presented comes from 12483 youths responding to the PbS Youth Climate Survey, conducted during the months of April and October in 2019 and 2020.

Juvenile justice leaders have been struggling since the system was created 100 years ago to better understand what

works to help young people who end up in their systems. Most of these youths have fallen through the gaps in other public systems, such as education and child welfare. Most are youths of color and have landed in the system due to the disadvantages they have faced: poverty, violence, abuse, unemployment and homelessness. Juvenile justice has the opportunity and obligation to try to use the time youths are in our care to help them and level the playing field when they leave.

Restraints don't work, relationships do.

PbS sees this time as a unique opportunity to leverage and sustain the positive changes resulting from the pandemic and the momentum for racial justice and equity. We will be focusing our training, coaching, resources and efforts on strategies and tools to improve relationships between staff and youths as an alternative to using restraints. We invite you to join us.

Thank you to all the facilities across the country who volunteer to join PbS and commit to improving youth outcomes and achieve PbS' vision that all youths are treated like one of our own. We will continue to share the data to help shape a brighter future for juvenile justice. For more information please visit the [PbS website](https://pbstandards.org) or send an email to: help@pbstandards.org.

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