



What Young People Say Matters

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Consistently making young people feel seen, heard and valued is essential to their ability to design their futures, build resiliency and thrive. Asking them is a simple and effective strategy to be sure they feel they are heard and valued.

The Performance-based Standards (PbS) program sets standards for juvenile justice agencies to make sure all young people feel seen, heard and valued as well as are screened for immediate health, mental health and educational needs, are provided appropriate services to address needs and experience the best of what research shows for secure confinement: family and community connections, skill building and positive relationships. To meet the standards, PbS participants ask young people about their experiences and feelings using two perception surveys: The Youth Climate Survey and the Reentry Survey. The surveys are anonymous, administered using the PbS kiosk (hand-held mobile device) or on paper and responses are reported in aggregate twice a year. Juvenile justice agencies respond to the survey results in various ways ranging from sharing the results with the young people and using them as the basis for group discussions to developing an intentional and structured plan that sets goals for improving the next round of survey results and the changes and steps to get there.

PbS was launched by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), Office of Justice Programs, US Department of Justice specifically to respond to the dismal and dangerous findings of the 2004 Conditions of Confinement Study. PbS developed national standards promoting evidence-based and best practices for secure residential facilities and outcome measures to indicate the extent to which the practices were being implemented. Over the years PbS has expanded to bring the adolescent development and neuroscience into national standards to guide and improve the American juvenile justice system's outcomes and impact on young people, their families and on staff. PbS operates on the simple belief that treating all young people like one of our own is the best approach to help justice-involved young people and take steps toward lessening the disparate impact of incarceration on young people of color. And that hearing from them directly is the best way to know how successful or not we are doing.

Recidivism rates remain high despite efforts to reduce population size and implement evidence-based programming. What's missing? Research and experience show that when young people feel heard, treated fairly, have input into decisions about them and develop healthy relationships they are more

Youth Climate Survey Responses

53%	said the food is good.
57%	said the rules are fair.
87%	talked on the phone with their parent and/or guardian.
18%	talked with their parent and/or guardian 5 times a week or more.
87%	said they were involved in developing their treatment or service plan.
77%	said staff are good role models.
75%	said staff seem to genuinely care about them.
67%	said they trust staff.

likely to engage in learning and positive behaviors. When they feel confident and hopeful, they are more likely to be motivated to finish school, get a job and stay out of trouble.

Survey data provides immeasurable information about how what we know works reaches the young people. Their perceptions matter – and without knowing that, we cannot expect to improve juvenile justice outcomes. PbS shares the aggregate survey responses to help inform discussions, policies and practices so young people are helped, not harmed, by their system involvement. Thank you to our voluntary agency participants for your commitment to continually improving how you serve young people and contributing to this national database.

The PbS Youth Climate Survey is administered to young people confined during the months of April and October and is designed to provide a snapshot of the conditions, quality of life and experiences at that single point in time. In October 2022, the survey was administered to 3,000 young people, 83% of whom elected to participate.

The PbS Youth Reentry Survey is administered year-round to young people shortly before they leave facilities and when they exit community supervision. It is designed to complement the Youth Climate Survey and focus on their perceptions of how prepared and ready they are to become successful, purposeful citizens. It includes questions inspired by the Search Institute’s Developmental Relationships program. In October 2022, the survey had been administered to 1,620 young people, 75% of whom elected to participate.

PbS data is designed to be used locally to improve conditions, services and youth outcomes. It is information, not good or bad, that is used to better understand and to respond to young peoples’ concerns and feelings. The surveys offer them a voice.

Youth Reentry Survey Responses	
86%	Said they had input into meetings about themselves
86%	said they had been treated fairly.
94%	said they were given chances to learn from their mistakes.
87%	said their case manager makes it clear they want them to live up to their potential.
95%	said they are confident they will achieve their reentry goals
95%	said they have the support they need for a successful reentry
64%	had a valid ID
71%	had a birth certificate
63%	had a cell phone
30%	had their immunization records

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