



## Developing a Family Council

The national movement to increase facility-family partnerships to improve youths' successful re-entry has led to the call for a formalized group or Family Council to guide facilities' and families' work together.



### Why?

There are numerous benefits for youths, staff and families when a facility has a family council:

- ◆ The behavior and progress of youths improve as relationships with the families improve;
- ◆ Families shed light on things about their child staff would not know otherwise;
- ◆ Similarly, facilities can share things about the youth's experience that will help facilities when the youth is at home; and
- ◆ Having a council may lead to more family engagement in areas such as treatment planning.

### What does a Family Council look like?

The structure is developing differently across the country, but to start:

- ◆ A group of parents, someone who represents administration, aftercare managers, educators and transition people who meet on a monthly basis for about one hour.



#### Important tips:

- ◆ The Family Council can be any size, whoever wants to be a part of it should be!
- ◆ Schedule Family Council meetings around visitation hours for family member convenience.

### What does a Family Council do?

- ◆ Provides a forum for family members and other people involved with youths' rehabilitation to voice suggestions and concerns and stay informed about facility life;
- ◆ Represent the family perspective in special planning groups;
- ◆ Highlight initiatives and programs at the facility; and
- ◆ Reviews the PbS family survey results, discusses and shares ideas for improvements.

### How do I get people to join?

- ◆ Provide information about how to join in newsletters and parent information packets;
- ◆ Ask caseworkers to reach out to families;
- ◆ Offer tours to potential members; and
- ◆ Solicit volunteers online in the visitors/family section.



#### Sustainability

Creating a Family Council is only the first step. To keep it going:

- ◆ Set consistent meeting time and date—don't cancel meetings;
- ◆ Make sure sessions are productive; and
- ◆ Have a welcoming attitude.

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