



Reentry Measurement Standards

Project Update: October 2017

Introduction

Recognizing the need to measure and better understand what works to keep youths on the path to successful adulthood when involved in the juvenile justice system, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) launched the Juvenile Reentry Measurement Standards project in October 2015. The project's goal is to provide the field with a set of national standards and outcome measures aligned with adolescent development research that monitor the effectiveness of reentry services and promote practices that result in positive youth outcomes. [OJJDP](#) selected the [PbS Learning Institute](#) (PbS), the developers of the successful PbS standards continuous improvement model for juvenile justice facilities and residential programs, to lead the project. PbS and its partners, the Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators (CJCA) and the Vera Institute of Justice (Vera), are combining their expertises to merge evidence- and experience-based reentry practices into a blueprint for a youth's transitions from juvenile justice confinement and supervision to living independently and crime-free. The final product for OJJDP will be a set of national reentry standards, outcome measures, data elements and recommendations for implementation.

Establishing Goals, Objectives and Framework

The project was launched with the goal to develop and pilot test a set of standards to assess and better understand how juvenile justice reentry services impact public safety and positive youth development. The standards will be designed for juvenile justice facilities, programs and services for youths post-adjudication, both residential placement and community supervision, and will promote the implementation of the adolescent development approach.

Similar to the development of PbS, the standards will be grounded in research and developed with an emphasis on continual feedback and field testing to make sure the final product is meaningful, feasible and valid. The first two years have been spent completing two tasks to prepare for field testing:

- 1 – Synthesizing and analyzing (a) the current literature in juvenile reentry and positive youth development (b) the current reentry services, practices and data across the nation to identify key indicators for measuring and the juvenile reentry process.
- 2 – Translating the key indicators into user-friendly and meaningful draft juvenile reentry measurement standards.

PbS and the team began by creating a framework to focus the two-pronged first activity and provide a strategy for merging the findings. In consultation with OJJDP, reentry and juvenile justice leaders, researchers and practitioners, PbS identified an initial set of six system and five youth domains:

- System domains: Assessment, Case Management, Cross-system Collaboration, Implementation, Cost-effectiveness and Reoffending;
- Youth domains: Educational Achievement, Gainful Employment, Family and Social Supports, Well-being and Health and Community Connection and Contribution.

Within the framework domains, the team identified 134 practices to research for the literature review and field scan.

Literature Review

To identify studies for inclusion in the research review, Vera first looked at existing literature searches completed in-house and the reentry “classics” and expanded on their reference lists. Vera next searched for existing meta-analyses and systematic reviews for current information on the effectiveness of reentry and aftercare programming. Lastly, Vera completed an electronic database search and conducted an organizational website review to fill in any remaining gaps and to supplement other information gathered. The research was included in the literature review if it was from a peer-reviewed journal, published report, dissertation or research brief and met the inclusion criteria of youth, post-release, in the United States, from 2000-2016 and fit into one of the 11 domains. A total of 173 studies were included in the review.

Vera assessed the each study that met the inclusion criteria for methodological rigor and categorized the findings into tiers: studies showing the highest quality research (Tier 3 – includes randomized control trial (RCT) or high-level quasi-experimental design), studies showing moderate quality research (Tier 2 – includes quantitative studies with comparable or equivalent control groups that also address program fidelity) and studies with baseline level research (Tier 1 – includes quantitative studies with either an absence of a control group or used non-equivalent control groups). Of the 173 studies reviewed, only a few (8% or 13 studies) were determined to be of the highest quality research. The majority (53% or 92 studies) were the least, Tier 1. The remaining studies were in between (39% or 68 studies). (See Progress Report: Literature Review Findings for more information.) Vera then classified the practices into three groups according to the quality of the research: strongly supported by research, moderately supported by research or little or not at all supported by research.

Field Scan

To conduct the field scan, PbS and CJCA began with a state-by-state approach and searched for reentry services and practices in use between 2010 and the present. Twenty-nine states and the District of Columbia were scanned in depth for prevalence of the 134 practices: published materials, internal data from PbS and CJCA surveys, on-site observations and personal communications. Information about practices in the remaining jurisdictions was collected by internet scraping and internal information. Additionally, practices not discovered especially prevalent by the scans (22) were then the focus of a targeted scan, looking at federal funding, national organizations, training and technical assistance centers as well as legislation. PbS found the existence of all 134 practices in at least one jurisdiction according to published materials.

PbS established a weighted scale based on the number and type of sources indicating the prevalence of each practice, designating published sources as the most reliable. PbS used the average and standard deviation of the total data set to categorize the practices into three groups: highly prevalent, moderately prevalent and little or not at all prevalent. The majority of practices (about 69%) were found to be moderately prevalent (with a mid-range amount of overall points on the weighted scale). About 18% were found to be highly prevalent and the remaining practices (13%) were only a little or not at all prevalent. (See Progress Report: Field Scan Findings for more information.)

Analyzing the Findings

PbS and partners conducted a side-by-side comparison for each of the practices to integrate the findings and prepare to develop the standards. PbS established three groups to ensure research is the priority when developing the standards while recognizing the general lack of juvenile reentry research and the advancements in the field to implement evidence- and experience-based practices.

All practices found to be strongly supported by research or moderately supported by research and highly prevalent were placed in Group A. Practices with some research support, some or little/no prevalence and practices with little/no research but found to be highly prevalent were placed in Group B. The remaining practices became Group C.

Overall, about half of the practices (48%) were categorized as Group A, about a quarter (24%) were in Group B and slightly more (27%) were in Group C.

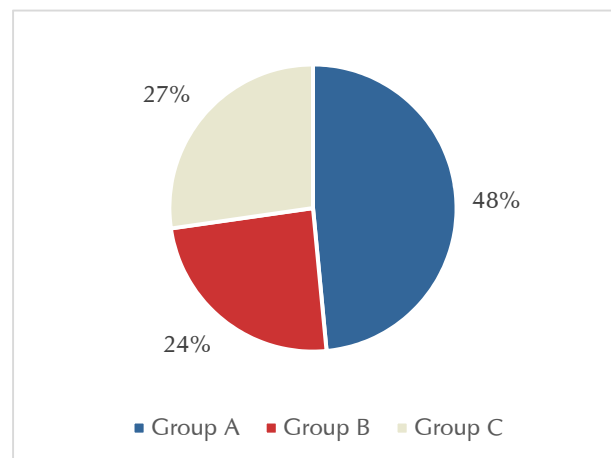


Figure 1: Findings of Literature Review and Field Scan



Development of Reentry Measurement Standards

Throughout the first two years, PbS has continuously sought and collected feedback from OJJDP, reentry leaders and practitioners, researchers and subject matter experts. As each strategy and task mentioned above was undertaken, PbS asked for input and advice: domain areas, the 134 identified reentry practices, research strategy, classification of findings into three groups and preliminary drafts of standards. The iterative process was very helpful and will continue until the final product is delivered to OJJDP to ensure the standards are meaningful, helpful and will be embraced by the field. To date there have been several “final drafts” of the standards, each with significant improvements from the previous.

In March 2017, a draft was presented to the project’s Technical Working Group (TWG) during a day-and-a-half meeting. The members, representing juvenile justice agencies, reentry programs, researchers, youths and experts, considered a total of 63 individual standards in nine domains. Each standard was presented with the specifics of the literature review and field scan in addition to the group designation. The discussion and debates, along with additional research and feedback, resulted in the draft standards for the first round of field testing. The standards will be revised to incorporate the field testing findings after each of the five rounds, which will be conducted over the next 12-15 months.

Future Work

PbS will field test the measurement standards to learn if they are meaningful, feasible, valuable, and understandable to the field and will identify strategies to recommend for broad/ national implementation. Final recommended measurement standards incorporating the findings and feedback gathered during the pilot phase will then be presented to OJJDP.



Project Partners

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

OJJDP provides national leadership, coordination, and resources to prevent and respond to juvenile delinquency and victimization. OJJDP supports states and communities in their efforts to develop and implement effective and coordinated prevention and intervention programs and to improve the juvenile justice system so that it protects public safety, holds youth appropriately accountable, and provides treatment and rehabilitative services tailored to the needs of juveniles and their families.

PbS Learning Institute

PbS is the non-profit organization dedicated to treating all youths in custody as one of our own. PbS incorporated in 2004, the same year it was selected a winner of the prestigious Innovations in American Government Award by the Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation at Harvard University – the only juvenile justice program yet to be named a winner.

The project began in 1995 with funding from OJJDP to address the often dangerous and inadequate conditions in youth facilities as revealed in the Congressionally-mandated 1994 Conditions of Confinement Study and the finding that existing process, checklist standards had no impact. Over the years PbS has developed into a continuous improvement model grounded in research that holds youth-serving agencies to the highest standards of operations, programs and services provides on-line data collection and analysis tools to measure and monitor performance twice a year. Currently more than 200 assessment, detention, correction and community-based facilities in 36 states participate in PbS.

Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators

CJCA is the national organization of state juvenile justice agency directors dedicated to improving local juvenile correctional services, programs and practices so the youths within the systems succeed when they return to the community and to providing national leadership and leadership development for the individuals responsible for the systems.

CJCA was the recipient of the original OJJDP grants to develop PbS from 1995-2007 and worked with OJJDP worked to transition PbS from a free federal grant project to a self-sustaining independently-run national program when federal funding ended.

Vera Institute of Justice

Vera is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit center for justice policy, research, and practice, with offices in New York City, Washington, DC, New Orleans and Los Angeles. Founded in 1961, its projects and reform initiatives, typically conducted in partnership with local, state, or national officials, are located across the United States and around the world.



Performance-
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