



Perspective January 2017

A biannual snapshot of the conditions of confinement and quality of life in residential facilities for young offenders.

Using PbS and Research to Improve Education and Recidivism Outcomes

Performance-based Standards (PbS) is a data-driven improvement model that challenges juvenile justice agencies to continually meet the highest standards for residential care of youths. Launched in 1995 by the US Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), PbS sets standards for safety, rehabilitation services, programming, reentry and family connection. PbS measures participants' performance by collecting and reporting data from both administrative records and survey responses from youths, staff and families. The information provides a holistic picture of the conditions and quality of life in residential facilities, highlights practices that are effective in promoting youths' healthy maturation and identifies those that are not. PbS trains staff to use the information to change practices and support reforms implementing the adolescent development approach.

PbS data is reported every April and October. In October 2016, 224 facilities in 35 states participated in PbS: 126 correction, 50 detention, 15 assessment and 33 community residential programs. The PbS Perspective is published biannually to provide a national snapshot of juvenile justice residential care. The PbS Perspective January 2017 shares some of the aggregate data from October 2016 that are used to assess alignment with research and are practices participants focus on to improve outcomes for youths.

Communicating With Families Improves Educational Achievement

Research finds open communication between facility staff and families leads to positive outcomes, including educational achievement.¹ PbS collects information about family involvement by surveying youths, staff and family (including other social supports). PbS collected 1,182 Family Surveys from correction facilities in October 2016. The majority (92%) of families reported they know who to contact when they have questions about their child's well-being. Additionally, 81% of families reported they were kept up to date on their child's educational/vocational activities and progress. PbS collected 270 Family Climate Surveys from community residential programs in October 2016. When asked the same questions, 88% of families reported they know who to contact with questions and 77% reported that they were kept up to date on activities and progress.

Working with Families Helps Reduce Recidivism

Research shows family involvement in decision-making helps to ease a youth's transition back to the community.² In October 2016, the majority of families surveyed by correction facilities (73%) and by community residential programs (70%) reported they were involved in the development of their child's treatment plan. Of those who were involved, nearly all said they understood and agreed with the plan.

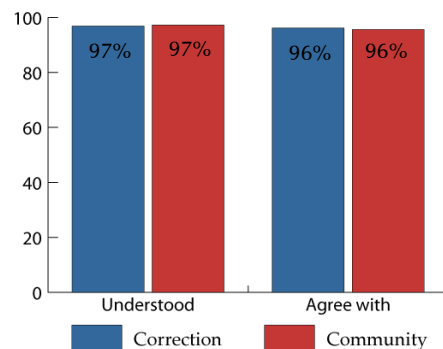


Figure 1: Of the families involved, those who "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" to understanding and agreeing with plan.

Substance Use Treatment and Vocational Skills Impact Recidivism

Research also shows timely substance use treatment³ and vocational skills development⁴ help to reduce youth recidivism. The PbS Youth Record collects information on the treatment and programming prescribed for youths through screening and assessments as well as whether or not the services were received. In October 2016, PbS collected data from 2,886 youth records of youths who had left correction facilities. Looking at only the youths confined for more than 60 days (enough time to receive services), of the youths whose treatment plans prescribed substance use treatment, 87% received the recommended treatment. Nearly all youths leaving community programs (98% of 858 records reviewed) whose treatment plans prescribed substance abuse treatment, received the treatment.

In October 2016, both correction and community programs both reported the highest levels of vocational program involvement since 2012. In correction facilities, of the youths confined for more than 60 days, 69% completed a vocational skills curriculum. In community facilities, 72% of youths who participated in a vocational program earned a certificate or otherwise demonstrated competency in the program.

Facilities Promote Well-being through Safe Environments

The Pathways to Desistance Study found a reduced probability of continued system involve-

ment and antisocial activity in youths who reported feeling safe.⁵ The PbS Youth Climate Survey asks youths questions about facility conditions, including their perceptions of safety. PbS collected 5,206 Youth Climate Surveys from correction facilities and 726 from community residential programs in October 2016. The majority of youths in both types of facilities (75% correction, 68% community) reported not fearing for their safety.

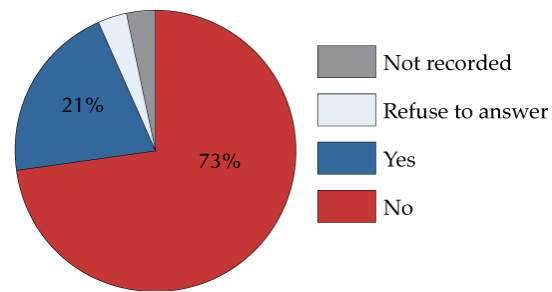


Figure 2: Youth responses to fear for safety in correction facilities.

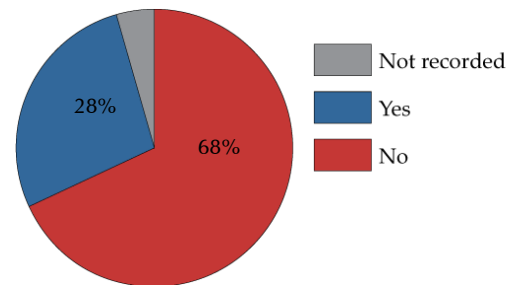


Figure 3: Youth responses to fear for safety in community residential programs.

The Youth Climate Survey also asks youths if they know how to find help if someone assaults or threatens them. About three quarters (74%) of youths in correction facilities and 83% in community residential programs reported they know how to find help.

¹ Cavanagh, C. (2015). The Impact of Family Involvement on Youth's Success. *Performance-based Standards*. Retrieved from <http://pbstandards.org/cjcareources/274/ImpactFamilyYouthSuccess.pdf>

² Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2013). Four Approaches to Family Team Meetings. Retrieved from <http://www.aecf.org/m/resource/doc/FourApproachesToFamilyTeamMeetings.pdf>

³ Butts, J. A., Roman, J. K., and Gitlow, E. (2009). Organizing for outcomes: Measuring the effects of reclaiming futures in four communities. A Reclaiming Futures National Evaluation Report. Portland, OR: Reclaiming Futures National Program Office, Portland State, University.

⁴ Lipsey, M., Howell, J., Kelly, M., Chapman, G. & Carver, D. (2010). Improving the Effectiveness of Juvenile Justice Programs. Washington, DC: Center for Juvenile Justice Reform.

⁵ Pathways to Desistance study presented at the June 2012 National Institutes of Justice (NIJ) conference. For more information please go to: www.pathwaysstudy.pitt.edu