

# **Research Highlights: Perceptions of Educational Reentry Preparedness among Detained and Committed Youth**

Kaylee Noorman, MS and Julie Brancale, PhD

Florida State University, College of Criminology and Criminal Justice

## **Project Overview**

We evaluated educational reentry preparedness among youth being released from a residential program or facility using PbS Youth Reentry Survey data from 6 time points between October 2019 to April 2022 (N = 5,280). Our primary research question assessed whether youth feel prepared to return to school upon release. Our secondary research question examined the factors that contributed to youths' perception of being prepared for educational reentry.

## **Key Findings**

- Most youth strongly agree (55.68%) or agree (41.76%) that they have a plan for their long-term education and employment that is helpful.
- Youth who disagree/strongly disagree that they have a helpful plan were less likely to be returning to stable living arrangements (at home with family, transitional housing, at a program/facility) post-release and were substantially less likely to have the essential documents (i.e., valid ID, Social Security Card, birth certificate, medical and immunization records) necessary for school reenrollment than youth who agree or strongly agree that they have a helpful plan.
- The most significant predictor of educational reentry preparedness was having a positive behavioral outlook on reentry goals. Namely, youth who felt they had the necessary supports, were confident in their goals, and who understood and could comply with their reentry plan were significantly more likely to be prepared for educational reentry.
- Receiving educational assistance while in detention and commitment also strongly predicted educational reentry preparedness. Namely, youth who received help with their education/GED and were given information about ways to pay for college were significantly more likely to be in higher agreement on educational reentry preparedness than youth who did not receive this assistance.
- Youth who will be receiving aftercare programming and have access to structural supports (i.e., transportation, childcare, living expenses) were also significantly more likely to be prepared for educational reentry.

## **Policy Implications**

Our findings support the need for reentry programming that begins while the youth is incarcerated and extends beyond their return to the community. Namely, these programs should provide continuing education assistance and prioritize the continuity of youths' academic career post-release, increase youth confidence in their goals and reentry expectations, and continue to provide support post-release through aftercare programming and assistance with acquiring transportation, childcare, and financial aid.