

Measuring Outcomes and Impact of Juvenile Reentry Services and Sanctions

ABSTRACT

The reentry process presents several challenges to youth returning to their communities from a period of confinement, including a resumption of their education in a community school, potential reunification with their family and- especially for young adults- preparing for and finding employment. The JJC offers a range of services to facilitate this process, with reentry planning integrated into a youth's entire time in custody. The youth and their families are involved in the planning process as well. Having now established reentry policies and practices, the JJC wishes to examine the effectiveness of its efforts on behalf of returning youth to determine if the services as implemented achieve what JJC hopes to accomplish. The WRI of Rutgers University, Camden proposes to assist the JJC with this task, with the objective of assessing: a) whether the services JJC provides, such as job skills training and placement, are the appropriate ones for youth; b) how well the various JJC components and their external partners in reentry interact; c) whether support services are available as soon as youth are released; d) the means to improve youth's reintegration into schools; e) the effectiveness of three transitional living programs; and f) whether JJC's existing data systems permit it to measure success and determine the impact of its reentry practices. Our assessment will identify areas in need of strengthening and will yield recommendations for modifications based on established best reentry practices.

To accomplish the objectives of this assessment, we will utilize a mixed methods approach using semi- structured interviews, focus groups and surveys that will examine specific internal and external systems charged with the responsibility of preparing a juvenile for successful reentry. We will also conduct quantitative analyses of available JJC and DOL data to assess the results of employment related services provided, such as obtaining job training or a job. Interviews, focus groups and surveys will seek to elicit the goals and objectives of specific internal JJC departments as well as external agencies that work with the JJC and their understanding of how relationships between JJC and their partners are supposed to function. We will also ask participants to assess how these processes are working in actuality, and whether they believe objectives are being met. The goal of this information gathering will be to identify where the process is working well along with any gaps in the process.