JUVENILE REENTRY and AFTERCARE COLLABORATIVE
Implementing an Effective Aftercare System

Overview and scope:

Developing effective aftercare for youth leaving placement in the justice system requires a clear understanding of what families need to care for their children and how "the system" can partner with communities to meet those needs and provide meaningful opportunities for youth and families to be successful and independent. These partnerships and strategies must be driven by the knowledge that all young people have tremendous capacity to grow, learn and change, including youth involved in the juvenile justice (delinquency) system. This capacity for positive change means that youth returning from out-of-home placement or incarceration can go on to lead productive, healthy lives and contribute to our communities, with appropriate aftercare[1] resources, supervision and support.

It is clear to the Collaborative that there are many dedicated, knowledgeable and caring professionals within the juvenile justice system, within the Department of Juvenile Justice and in the community-based organizations across the state. These individuals, who are passionate about caring for our most vulnerable youth and families and returning them to our communities stronger than they were when the entered the system. However, our discussions and work have also illustrated the many ways in which "the system" creates obstacles for these professionals in doing their work well. This document describes some of these obstacles that can and must be addressed, as well as the overarching principles and the type of policies, practices and programs which can keep youth with their families and communities, whenever possible, and ensure that the juvenile justice system meets its most fundamental obligations to improve the outcomes of youth, families and communities it serves.

Introduction:

The most effective approaches to youth delinquency rely upon community-based services instead of costly, ineffective incarceration or detention-based approaches. The best strategies for positive youth, family and community outcomes is to keep young people in their homes and communities and to address the underlying issues that bring them into contact with our child welfare, human services and / or juvenile justice systems. Investing in families and helping them care for their children may be the single most important factor in reducing the flow of youth into the juvenile justice system. Breaking down siloes between youth- and family- serving public entities, investing in early support to vulnerable families, pooling knowledge and resources when possible, creating continuity of care and providing more holistic "wrap around" services would keep youth out of our delinquency system and our secure facilities. Utilizing restorative justice approaches to hold youth accountable if they cause harm – without relying on incarceration – can bring healing to crime victims and communities far more effectively than punishment-based strategies can. Identifying the factors giving rise to the disproportionate minority contact" with the juvenile justice system could improve the quality of life for many of Illinois' communities of color. Forging public – private partnerships to meet the needs of multi-needs youth and families, focusing on evidence-based approaches and creating meaningful opportunities for young people to have educational, recreational, vocational and other opportunities will produce the best return on investment of scarce resources.

When youth are incarcerated, they must receive appropriate aftercare planning and support to minimize costly and counter-productive institutional stays, ensure safe and successful transitions home, enhance community safety and achieve the positive youth outcomes taxpayers expect from our juvenile justice system. Without quality aftercare, young people leaving juvenile institutions face unacceptably high odds for failure, recidivism, and more incarceration. Good reentry planning and

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[1] In this context, "aftercare" and / or "reentry" is the network of planning, services, support and supervision designed for youth leaving custody of the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) or one of Illinois' juvenile detention facilities. Effective aftercare is critical to rehabilitating youthful offenders effectively, capitalizing on youth potential for change and growth and providing real opportunities for positive youth outcomes.

aftercare services benefit both youth and taxpayers through reduced recidivism, enhanced public safety and better community outcomes. Clearly, even youth at the "deepest end" of our juvenile justice system – those youth who have been incarcerated in DJJ facilities – are capable of returning to their communities and achieving positive outcomes if the system responds appropriately.

Principle 1: Eliminating Unnecessary Incarceration:

Incarceration is the most severe, disruptive and costly sanction the juvenile court can apply to juveniles in conflict with the law. Overuse of incarceration is not only counter-productive and damaging to youth, families and communities, it is unacceptably costly – averaging nearly $80,000 per year to incarcerate a youth in an IDJJ facility. Even the most intensive community-based treatment strategies cost far less and can be more effective at producing behavior change. Stakeholders and decision-makers must also understand that criminal justice research has consistently demonstrated that unnecessary incarceration does not produce positive behavior change and, in fact, may decrease public safety, increase risks of reoffending, particularly by lower-risk youth, and damage youth and families irreparably.

In an effectively juvenile justice system, communities can and do rely upon a range of effective community-based services for youth and families and use secure confinement only as a last resort and in ways narrowly tailored to preserve public safety. Instead, these systems rely upon community-based services which have been demonstrated to improve youth outcomes, enhance public safety and utilize scarce fiscal resources more effectively than incarceration-based approaches. Moreover, reliance upon community-based services and the resulting reduction in unnecessary commitments allows institutions to better care for and provide effective services to a smaller number of youth in custody. To move toward a system in which incarceration is used as a last resort for those youth with the highest risk youth and not as a substitute for addressing behavioral health [2]mental health, substance abuse, educational, housing or parenting needs, there are several strategies which must be employed:

- Provide and use data to drive policy and practice: While the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice does not decide which youth are committed to its custody, the Department has a critical role to play in providing information and data on incarceration patterns, youth needs and emerging issues. Only with timely, accurate and complete data can state and local stakeholders make informed policy decisions and resource allocations to minimize the unnecessary use of incarceration. The Collaborative recommends development and implementation of a comprehensive reporting mechanism for providing external stakeholders, advocates and advisory bodies such as the DJJ Advisory Board, the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission and others, with timely, complete and accurate information regarding the commitment of youth to DJJ, the services and support provided to them by the Department and the outcomes these youth attain in and following release from custody.

- Reverse fiscal incentives which encourage cost-shifting through incarceration: Currently, communities who seek to keep youth in their homes and meet mental health needs, provide substance abuse treatment or other services must figure out how to do so using whatever resources that may be available in that community. However, if a youth is committed to DJJ, the cost of that youth's care and treatment are borne solely by the state. While this may be appropriate in some cases, these clear fiscal incentives may lead to unnecessary use of incarceration for low risk youth who pose little risk to community safety. Illinois should consider funding strategies to require counties who choose to use incarceration for low-risk youth who could be treated more effectively in the community to share the costs of incarceration.

- Invest in community-based services: While state funds are critically limited, investing in community-based services is fiscally prudent and enhances public safety and positive youth outcomes by offering families and youth support, services and new skills. Key opportunities for sound investment include sustaining and expanding Redeploy Illinois resources for counties incarcerating youth at highest rates as well as encouraging counties with lower incarceration rates to access resources from time to time, to prevent unnecessary incarceration. Better communication and coordination between city, county, state and federal policy makers and funders could fill gaps in community-based services, and address redundancies and conflicts in performance measures, reporting requirments and address other obstacles to efficient, effective service delivery by community-based organizations. State-funded services such as CCBYS (Comprehensive Community-Based Youth Services), UDIS (Unified Delinquency Intervention Services) and others also enable community-based providers to respond to youth and families in crisis, provide respite care and divert youth from deeper system involvement, whenever possible. To maximize impact, these services must be adequately funded to utilize evidence based, family-focused strategies which not only stabilize youth and families in crisis, but build on family strengths and assets. At a minimum, given continued scarcity of resources for community-based

[2] In this report, "behavioral health needs" refers to mental health, substance abuse and / or trauma treatment needs.

programming, Illinois must focus on policy and practice safeguards to prevent increasing numbers of low-risk youth and non-offenders are not incarcerated due to a lack of community-based placements and services.

- Invest in effective community-based supervision: While surveillance-based approaches are unlikely to change youth behaviors, appropriate community-based supervision strategies can provide necessary structure and support for youth who are at risk of incarceration. Illinois must ensuring that probation services are adequately funded, supported and evidence-based. At the same time, probation agencies must ensure that probation policy and practice is not focused primarily on surveillance and is instead designed to support positive behavior change, development of pro-social skills by youth and families and discourages unnecessary use of incarceration.

- Maximize the use of federal funding to serve juvenile-justice-involved youth: The state executive branch agencies have made unprecedented progress in implementing mechanisms to use Medicaid funding to defray the costs of serving youth leaving DJJ custody. With leadership of the Governor's Office and Staff, executive branch agencies have revised policies, cross-trained staff and shared access to billing systems to open the flow of Medicaid services to the juvenile justice population. State stakeholders are now turning to Title IV-E resources, which can provide support for non-secure placements for youth in need of residential services. This work, which represents a commitment to our state's most vulnerable youth, is promising. With continued collaboration and focus, these mechanisms and technical assistance could be extended to county-based providers and public agencies (such as probation departments) to increase the use of federal funds at the local level, which can, in turn, reduce the incentives to "cost-shift" by committing youth to DJJ unnecessarilty and enabling more youth to stay in their communities. Incorporating appropriate processes and language in court commitment orders could facilitate expanded IV-E claiming for the benefit of these youth. It should be noted that youth advocates caution against expanding IV-E mechanisms in ways which encourage labeling families as abusive or neglectful or removing or keeping youth from their homes unnecessarily.

- Support effective community planning: The Illinois Juvenile Court Act establishes local Juvenile Justice Councils and describes the utility of community leaders, juvenile justice stakeholders, youth and families joining forces to analyze the needs and strengths of the community and to create a comprehensive local juvenile justice plan for utilizing resources, creating effective policy and practice, enhancing public safety and meeting the needs of youth and families. Institutionalizing, supporting and holding local Juvenile Justice Councils (or similar local governance groups) accountable for creating these local plans could not only help communities articute their needs more strategically, but can also help reduce or eliminate unnecessary incarceration. (705 ILCS 405/6-12)

- Utilize assessment for effective placement: Today, when a youth is committed to DJJ custody, that youth is always placed in a secure facility. Other jurisdictions, such as Missouri and Washington DC, have created placement options for youth who – while committed to the care of the "corrections" agency – do not need to be securely confined. Illinois should not only develop a range of alternative placement options for DJJ-committed-youth, but should also develop a sound, evidence-based assessment process and policies to identify and serve youth whose needs can be met more appropriately in community-based, non-secure settings.

- Anticipate unintended consequences of system integration: As the state considers DCFS / DJJ "merger" or works toward enhanced child welfare / juvenile justice system integration, stakeholders must protect against unintended "net-widening." Policy and practice safeguards must be developed to also ensure that youth and families involved in the delinquency system are not unnecessarily pulled into the child welfare system or vice versa.

- Stem the flow of youth back into incarceration for parole violations: In addition to implementing "no entry" strategies focused on reducing unnecessary commitments to corrections, policy and practice must be developed to prevent youth from reentering secure facilities for parole violations and / or failures to comply with technical terms of release. (See below.)

Principle 2: Effective, appropriate services which minimize stays in secure facilities and prepare youth for successful return to the community

Developmentally appropriate, evidence-based services must be available and targeted to meet individual youth and family needs, to enable youth to leave costly confinement quickly, to return successfully to their communities and to refrain from reoffending. Unlike "no entry" efforts, which must, at least in part, be lead and implemented by stakeholders outside DJJ, the policy, practices and programs which prepare youth for successful and timely release are currently the sole responsibility of the Department.

Safe and Appropriate Conditions of Care:

Before examining services and programs which prepare youth for successful reentry, this report must first address the state's responsibilities to ensure institutional safety and quality care of the children in its custody. Without question, the state has an irreducible obligation to provide safe, developmentally appropriate and humane conditions for the youth in its custody. Failure to provide appropriate conditions of care is not only unacceptable, but also impedes efforts to return youth home safely and successfully, further traumatizes vulnerable youth, exacerbates underlying mental health conditions and – ultimately – increases the risk of negative outcomes for that youth and his community. To ensure that Illinois meets and exceeds minimal standards of care, the Collaborative recommends:

- Address MfC Report Findings: State stakeholders should carefully review and implement the recommendations of the Behavioral Health Assessment and Report, conducted by a team of Illinois and national experts in youth behavioral health, regarding the urgent behavioral health needs of youth in the state's care. This report, supported by the MacArthur Foundation's Models for Change Initiative, provides critical insights into the mental health, trauma and substance use treatment needs of youth in DJJ facilities.

- Address physical infrastructure needs: Some progress has been made in re-furbishing facilities with the furnishings and structures which pose risks of self-harm. However, state stakeholders must continually address the factors which create risks of self-harm in juvenile corrections facilities, ties between use of isolation and self-harm as well as aggression to other youth and staff. More broadly, the John Howard Association has issued findings regarding troubling and declining physical plant conditions at each of Illinois facilities. Left unaddressed, this decay in physical infrastructure not only gets progressively more expensive to address, but could place youth and staff at unacceptable risks. As importantly, in some facilities like St. Charles, physical decay limits the programming space available for use with youth.

- Discipline and isolation: Disciplinary policy and practice must be constantly examined and revised, if necessary, to ensure developmentally appropriate approaches which advance the goals of youth rehabilitation and treatment. Policy and practice regarding the use of isolation / confinement must be continually monitored, documented and shared with appropriate external advocates and stakeholders to ensure that the use of isolation – which has been demonstrated to increase the risk of self-harm and aggressive behavior -- is used appropriately only when necessary to ensure youth and staff safety rather than as a routine disciplinary response. As the unnecessary use of isolation is eliminated, staff must be offered training, coaching and support to utilize other, more developmentally appropriate strategies to model appropriate behavior, teach youth new skills and behaviors, incentivize the positive behaviors sought and hold youth accountable for inappropriate behavior in safe, fair and developmentally appropriate ways.

While ensuring youth (and staff) safety, security and appropriate conditions of care are fundamental obligations, meeting these obligations is not good enough. In a model system, all institutional services and interactions are designed to prepare youth for timely return to their homes, successful community reentry and long-term positive outcomes. These positive outcomes include (but are not limited to) stable living arrangements, connection to pro-social family or community supports, positioning a youth for school or employment success and the capacity to contribute to the well-being of the community.

While no youth should be committed to DJJ primarily due to unmet behavioral health, educational, family or housing needs, it is likely that some communities do commit youth for these reasons.[3] Identifying these youth stabilizing them and linking them quickly with community-based service providers better equipped to meet these needs is critical. Other youth are likely to present both unmet behavioral health needs and other "criminogenic" risks – those factors demonstrated to be most correlated with delinquency involvement and potential reoffending. If youth are to be returned to their communities safely and successfully, DJJ staff and their partners must understand what factors do and do not correlate with criminogenic risk and craft appropriate strategies to address these factors, build on a youth's strengths and protective factors and develop the kind of knowledge and skills they will need to go home and succeed.

This focus has solid research foundations as well as an increasingly solid legal foundation. In fact, the United States Supreme Court has cited solid adolescent brain development research which clearly shows that all youth – even those who have committed serious offenses – have tremendous capacity for positive change and growth and that the justice system must acknowledge and respond to this capacity. We also know that youth in DJJ care bring a tremendous wealth of assets: talents, knowledge, skills, interests, goals and loving family and community members. It is an unfortunate fact that these youth will also bring risks for future offending, without the services and support that help them learn new skills and behaviors. Addressing these risks fairly and appropriately is, if not the primary obligation, certainly a key responsibility of the juvenile justice system.

Addressing Risks, Needs & Protective Factors:

Assessing a youth's risks, needs and protective factors is essential in understanding the factors contributing to a youth's delinquency involvement and – more importantly – in designing an effective plan for the youth's successful return to the community. Effective criminogenic risk and needs assessment helps pinpoint the individual factors most likely to contribute to that youth's risk for recidivism and build a practical plan to address those risks. The most effective assessment tools also identify protective factors and assets of individual youth and guide development of an individualized plan to reducing dynamic risk factors and build on protective factors to reduce re-offending and re-incarceration. Good assessment can minimize the imposition of personal opinions and biases, can help develop a common language among a variety of professionals working with a youth and family, can reduce redundancies and gaps in servixes and can foster system accountability for helping youth make positive changes which reduce their risks in the community. Using evidence-based assessment strategies to identify the needed level of services and the right types of services to reduce criminogenic risk, while building protective factors, is a critical component of effective institutional and aftercare.

Using evidence-based approaches to criminogenic risk reduction does *not* mean viewing a young person as "bad" or "dangerous." It does *not* mean that higher risk youth should be punished more severely. It *does* mean understanding how much support and structured programming youth will need to be successful. It *does* mean understanding and providing the specific kind of services and support a youth needs to be successful. It *does* mean understanding that placing onerous mandates on lower risk youth is unnecessary and wasteful and – more importantly – can increase a youth's risks and decrease protective factors. Using evidence-based practices *does* mean creating accountability for the system to identify, articulate and meet the needs of individual youth in its care.

In essence, evidence-based risk reduction requires a focus on three core principles which a solid body of current research suggests will decrease a youth's likelihood of reoffending and being at-risk for reincarceration. These three principles – risk, need and responsivity – require DJJ professionals and their community-based service partners to focus on the level of services each youth needs, the type of services each youth needs and the experiences and characteristics of youth which might influence their responses to services.[4] To provide youth

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[3] As indicated above, DJJ should provide and analyze data on youth commitments in order to identify emerging trends and to partner with state and local stakeholders to reduce unnecessary commitments of low risk, possibly high-needs youth who could be better served in their communities.

[4] *Implementing Evidence-Based Policy and Practice in Community Corrections*, National Institute of Corrections, United States Department of Justice, Second Edition, October 2009

with meaningful services and skills which can reduce their risk of reoffending and reincarceration, the Collaborative recommends:

- Assess and address risk: Assessing the risk level of an individual should drive the *intensity* of services that youth receives. Higher risk youth should receive more intense services and supervision and lower risk youth should receive less intense and intrusive services to produce the best outcomes. Targeting interventions to higher risk youth also allows the most effective use of scarce resources and minimizes intrusion into the lives of lower-risk youth, which can actually increase the likelihood of future delinquency involvement.

- Assess and address need: Targeting interventions appropriately simply means matching the services to the needs of individual youth. In addition to providing the right intensity of services, based on a youth's risk level, providing the right *type* of services is critical in helping a youth return home successfully.[5] For example, providing a youth with drug treatment programming –even high-quality treatment – will not reduce his overall risk if what that youth needs is a family-focused program which builds family bonds and functioning. Focusing on dynamic or changeable factors most correlated with a risk of future delinquency is also key. Focusing primarily on "static" or unchangeable factors, such as a youth's legal history or offense – while important in understanding risk levels – does little to help understand or provide the type of services a youth needs to return home successfully.

- Understand and account for responsivity: DJJ staff and service providers must be responsive to individual youth characteristics and environmental factors such as temperament, cognitive abilities, learning style, motivation, culture, and gender which influence how that young person responds and adjusts to the services provided. The personalities and approaches of staff will also greatly influence a youth's responsivity and staff training and support is key in enhancing their clients' outcomes.

- Understand and address trauma: Trauma is also a critical behavioral health need and a factor in responsivity. The prevalence and impact of trauma in the lives of system-involved youth cannot be overlooked if we wish to meet youth needs and foster positive outcomes. For example, the Northwestern University Juvenile Project, conducted by Linda Teplin in the Cook County juvenile detention facility, demonstrated conclusively that detained in Chicago faced remarkably "dire mental health needs and poor outcomes." Youth at this earlier stage of the juvenile justice system displayed significant, diagnosable mental health disorders, including nearly 75% of girls and 66% of boys with at least one psychiatric disorder, rates up to four times that of the general youth population.[6] More than half of these girls presented more than one mental health and / or substance abuse disorder, while nearly 46% or boys presented multiple disorders.[7] A recent study by the National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice (NCMHJJ) found that – even removing "conduct disorders" from consideration – two-thirds of juvenile justice involved youth suffered diagnosable mental health disorders. Data provided by DJJ indicates that nearly two-thirds of girls in DJJ custody have experienced severe abuse, neglect or other traumatic experiences prior to their commitment.[8]

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[5] The Youth Assessment and Screening Instrument (YASI) has been adopted by the Illinois Supreme Court, Administrative Office of the Illinois Courts for implementation in all probation / court services departments in Illinois. The YASI uses ten "domains" to identify youth risks and needs: legal history, family / environment, school connection, community / peers, alcohol / drugs, mental health needs, employment / free time, aggression, attitudes and skills. The YASI also assesses for and identifies protective factors which can be fostered to help keep youth connected with caring adults, build on a youth's interests and goals and increase positive outcomes.

[6] Testimony of Linda Teplin, Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences, Feinberg School of Medicine, Northwestern University before the Healthy Families and Communities Subcommittee, United States House of Representatives, March 2010.

[7] Id.

[8] Id.

These mental health, trauma and substance abuse needs place incarcerated youth at high risk for negative outcomes within corrections institutions and upon return to the community. In addition to the tremendous suffering of these youth, they face higher rates of educational failure, social impairment, employment obstacles, reincarceration and even early death.[9] As grim as these findings are, there is good news: as this report has emphasized repeatedly all youth –even those facing daunting mental health, trauma and substance abuse problems – are capable of tremendous positive change and growth. Youth can respond positively to treatment, can learn constructive ways to cope with trauma and can return safely and successfully to communities. It is the state's obligation to understand the impact of trauma in the lives of the young people in their care, to stabilize and provide behavioral health treatment and to capitalize upon youth potential for change, treatment success and community reintegration. .

Encouraging family involvement in the lives of youth is committed to DJJ can provide valuable information about a child's medical and mental health history, reduce a youth's sense of isolation and despair, and facilitate his or her successful re-engagement with family members upon release, a critical factor in reducing recidivism and reintegrating youth successfully back into society.[10] It should also be noted that screening, assessment and caseplanning processes must be thorough and comprehensive, but must not create additional traumas to youth. Clinical experts on the Collaborative

Currently, youth stay at DJJ reception centers, sometimes without access to education or services for days or weeks, while information is sent from their home communities and processed by DJJ intake staff. There may be relatively simple strategies to expediting the provision of information from home communities, schools, service providers, courts and families – including adequate internet access, tapping into state databases for education records, etc.

While these short term strategies should be implemented immediately, whenever possible, stakeholders should also consider other jurisdictions' models of assessment and caseplanning. In Missouri, for instance, assessment is conducted locally, and is used to drive placement decisions, including whether the youth needs to be placed in one of the state's secure facilities or whether there are more appropriate non-secure placements or services to meet the youth's identified risk levels and needs. Instead of implementing a separate risk and needs assessment tool or process at the state level, DJJ staff could access the assessments already conducted by probation staff[11] and examine whether and what types of services have been previously provided. Families could meet with staff in the community to help inform and drive intervention strategies prior to the placement decision and removal of the youth from the jurisdiction, sometimes to facilities hundreds of miles away from their home communities. It is also likely that medical, educational and other sources of information are more readily available at the local level than they will be to staff at remote intake locations. Not only could this approach for localized assessment improve continuity of care with youth, but could facilitate the provision, sharing and analysis of aggregate data to both assess systems performance, but drive policy and practice improvements and the allocation of resources to best meet the needs of youth, families, communities and the professionals who serve them.

Caseplans and case managers:

If meeting youth needs, reducing criminogenic risk and returning youth successfully to their communities are key responsibilities of DJJ, a key strategy in fulfilling these responsibilities is individualized caseplans for institutional services which – at a minimum – provide for the well-being

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[9] Teplin, March 2010.

[10] Report on the Behavioral Health Program for Youth Committed to Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice, Illinois Models for Change Behavioral Health Assessment Team, August 2010.

[11] As indicated above, all Illinois probation departments utilize the YASI to identify youth risk levels and needs. While some jurisdictions use the YASI prior to adjudication, all jurisdictions must utilize the YASI assessments with adjudicated youth on probation caseloads. Thus, the vast majority of youth will have YASI assessment results in their casefiles.

of the youth while incarcerated and at reentry and which ready the youth for timely, successful release to the community with positive long-term outcomes. The youth's caseplan must also include his or her interests, goals and talents as key components of that youth's service, release and aftercare plan. As indicated above, good caseplans ensure that youth receive the right intensity of services, the right type of services and that is attuned to the factors that influence the young person's responsivity to the people and programs around them.

Currently, one or more DJJ counselors supervise and interact with youth while in the facilities. However, based on file reviews and discussions with youth, staff and Parole Board members, it does not appear that there is a caseplan developed for each youth to govern the support and services youth receive. Moreover, when a youth nears eligibility for release, the Placement Resource Unit (PRU) supervisor is assigned the case and begins to try to identify needed placement and / or services which may be available to the youth upon release. However, youth do not meet the PRU member assigned to their cases, the PRU member does not interact with the youth in any way, and placement and treatment resources appear to be based on what is available in the region, whether an empty bed is available and whether a given provider's contract amount has been met or exceeded for that fiscal year. A parole officer, once assigned to the case, may conduct a home visit, meet with the youth's family and establish reporting and monitoring expectations. However, these a unified, holistic and family-focused case plan appears to be an exception, rather than the rule.

In the New Beginnings secure youth facility (operated by the Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services in Washington, DC), youth are assessed for risk levels and key areas of need upon admission. Within 15 days of admission, a youth and family conference or team meeting is held, to bring together the youth, his family and the lead casemanager, who will be responsible for understanding the youth's needs, building rapport, enhancing his motivation for positive change and helping the youth identify what his goals, strengths and interests are. It is this casemanager who will remain with the youth throughout the stay in the facility, through preparation for aftercare and after the youth is released for return home. This continuity of service, care and relationship increases the quality of both facility-based and aftercare services and support. Good caseplans and good casemanagers also create clarity (what are this youth's needs and strengths?), continuity (what's our plan for meeting this youth's needs throughout his involvement with the system?) and consistency (a youth and his family won't receive conflicting messages from various staff and agencies). Good caseplanning also creates system accountability – these casemanagers and the public-agency and private service professionals with home he or she work – are clearly responsible for helping a youth and family achieve positive outcomes and for measuring progress toward those outcomes.

Creating and implementing focused, individualized caseplans will greatly influence a youth's chances of successful return home. Thus, casemanagers should be highly skilled, highly motivated and receive specialized training for this critically important role. Their caseloads should allow regular contact with both the youth and the other IDJJ staff interacting with that youth. Continuity and stability of case managers throughout the youth's incarceration and aftercare is an important element of rapport, trust and successful outcomes.

The focus and content of caseplans is critical. Service plans must meets the needs of individual youth for safety, security, stability and overall well-being as well as plan for the services to which all incarcerated youth are entitled. These opportunities include, but are not limited to educational, recreational, vocational and other opportunities. Service plans must also address the individual

youth's mental and / or behavioral health needs.[12] Lastly, service plans must provide detailed, realistic and outcome-focused strategies for individual youth to provide the right intensity and type of services which can build on assets, reduce criminogenic need and prepare youth and their families for timely, successful community reentry.

Delivering high-quality services:

Correctional research consistently indicates that cognitive-behavioral programs -- appropriately targeted to meet individual youth needs – can help youth develop the pro-social attitudes and skills they need to make positive decisions and refrain from reoffending. Cognitive, skills-based approaches – which recognize that punishment alone does not change behavior and are instead designed to motivate positive change and to teach youth positive ways of thinking and behaving – can significantly reduce recidivism, enhance public safety and foster positive outcomes for youth.

In addition to the range of high-quality services to which every incarcerated youth is entitled (including those which ensure safety, address mental and behavioral health needs and provide educational, vocational and recreational opportunities), IDJJ must develop and deliver a continuum of services which can be individualized and include or utilize the following:

- Evidence-based programming: including group and individual program curricula which are either selected from the "menu" of rigorously evaluated programs for this population (such as the Blueprints programs) or which utilize techniques and approaches demonstrated to be effective in producing positive outcomes with this youth population.
- Cognitive-behavioral strategies: those which help youth develop positive ways of thinking about themselves, their behaviors and their communities and to develop new skills for positive decision-making and behaviors)
- Building on assets as an intentional, integral component of programming
- Motivational techniques should be utilized throughout the stay in the facility
- Family and / or other caring adults must be actively engaged in the youth's progress while in the facility
- Relapses or negative behaviors must be addressed in ways designed to hold youth accountable appropriately and fairly, while building motivation and ability to make positive change
- In addition provision of effective clinical services, educational opportunities, recreational activities, and vocational opportunities are critical components of a successful corrections continuum of care
- Constant reassessment and evaluation of progress will prepare a youth for timely, successful return to the community

And, to be effective, individualized case plans and service delivery which focuses on risk, need, responsivity and interactions and interventions that work must be incorporated into every aspect of DJJ and aftercare policy, practice and programming by community-based agencies.

Staff training and support:

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[12] While mental illness does not pose a criminogenic risk, per se, high-quality mental and behavioral health services are critical elements of effective juvenile justice practices. However, incarcerating youth to provide access to mental health and / or substance abuse services is not only ineffective, counter-productive and inhumane, but unnecessarily costly.

The National Institute of Corrections notes that knowledgeable, skilled staff are fundamental to successful outcomes with the youth they serve. "The success of offenders is highly dependent on the rapport developed between officers and clients. Officers are most successful when they: strike a balance between an enforcement and intervention role; clarify their role with the client; model pro-social behaviors, show empathy without diminishing accountability; and focus interactions on problem solving and addressing criminogenic needs."[13] Training, supporting and holding staff appropriately accountable for performance is critical to system success and to youth success.

Principle 3: Fair and Rational Release Decisions:

How and when youth are released from secure care matters in the outcomes for that youth. Corrections research consistently demonstrates that excessive stays in secure custody can actually increase the risk of recidivism, particularly for low risk youth. Keeping youth in DJJ facilities longer than necessary is counterproductive, costly and unfair. In addition to the length of stay, the manner in which release decisions are made and communicated to youth can have a significant impact on that youth's compliance with conditions of release and – ultimately – his success in the community.

Currently, under Illinois law, youth are committed to the care and jurisdiction of DJJ for an indeterminate sentence, which means that DJJ and the Illinois Parole Board (PRB) determine whether, when and under what circumstances a youth is released from custody. Policy and practice regarding Administrative Release Dates -- the dates by which youth are initially eligible for presentation to the parole board for release consideration – are offense-driven and do not allow consideration of individual youth characteristics, needs or assets. ARD dates are rarely accelerated based upon positive institutional behavior, progress on service goals or other factors, but are often extended, based on a variety of factors such as disciplinary tickets for misconduct in the facility. These tickets may be issued for major or minor misconduct. In essence, this approach to release is based on adjustment to conditions within the institution. Not only is is institutional adaptation an unreliable indicator of readiness for release, some youth with behavioral health and / or cognitive limitations may simply not be able to demonstrate "adequate" institutional compliance as we currently envision it. Moreover, what appears to be successful adaptation to and compliance with institutional rules and conditions may actually be maladaptive thinking and behavior. In other words, teaching youth how to survive and thrive in a juvenile prison may not be the kind of skills and behaviors we want them to utilize in the community.

As a whole, release timing, decisions and processes are based largely on an adult correctional model, which may not be developmentally appropriate, efficient or effective to foster sound release decisions. Collaborative members have expressed interest in determining how other jurisdictions make decisions – either by law, policy or practice – regarding release dates, release authority, parole terms and conditions and other factors. Members of the group have asked whether there are more developmentally appropriate mechanisms for deciding whether and a youth is released and setting the post-release requirements, supervision and sanctions applicable. Stakeholders should continue to gather and examine available information regarding the efficacy of an adult parole model to youth in the care of the state and consider revising policy and practice accordingly.[14] In the meantime, to ensure that parole decisions are part of a constructive process to return youth successfully to their communities, the Collaborative recommends:

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[13] NIC, Id.

[14] Public Act 096-1271requires the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission to develop a report and recommendations regarding "effective reintegration of youth offenders into communities to which they are returning." Accordingly, the Commission has launched a comprehensive review of parole / release processes, aftercare services, parole services and parole revocation processes. An additional element of the Commission's charge is to develop recommendations for a "system to provide quarterly statewide reports" on youth released from DJJ and a range of process and outcome measures for these youth.

- Ensure due process: It is a non-negotiable obligation of the juvenile justice system to protect the due process rights of incarcerated youth – including, but not limited to, rights to safety, adequate care, developmentally appropriate treatment, due process protections for addressing grievances, resolving disciplinary matters and obtaining meaningful hearings on eligibility for release.

- Foster informed, consistent decision-making: Parole Board Members (PRB) must – at a minimum – have access to timely and complete information regarding a youth's needs, goals and progress to determine when a youth is ready for release. Training in the concepts of risk reduction and effective institutional and community-based services must be provided to PRB members. Parole decisions must also be based on fair, relevant and objective criteria and must be documented, so that youth, families and system professionals understand the basis of parole decisions and the expectations of all parties going forward. There is currently no mechanism for review of parole decisions, which means that a youth can be kept in confinement indefinitely, without an opportunity to seek redress of any kind. Illinois must develop mechanisms for review of parole decisions, as a matter of system accountability and fundamental fairness.

- Understand and apply procedural justice: Procedural justice isn't about being "nice" to youth. It requires understanding that the way important decisions – like whether a youth stays locked up or goes home – are made and communicated, can affect that youth's behavior following release. This research states that "legal authorities legitimate their decisions by making them through fair procedures, which leads people more willing to voluntarily accept those decisions and to follow them across time irrespective of whether their behavior is being monitored.[15]" Put another way, if we expect youth to follow rules and conditions of parole, even when a parole agent isn't watching them, authorities must "demonstrate" legitimacy through fair processes and procedures, including release / parole decisions. In one examination of corrections policy and practice, the researchers noted that "prisoners can hardly be expected to take the state's pretentions to moral authority and concern seriously unless the representations of that authority and concern, which they receive from the activities of prison administrators and staff, give them reason to do so."[16] The key elements of fairness, in this context, include the following three key elements:[17]
  - Neutral, unbiased decision making rather than ones based on personal opinions, biases or arbitrary or capricious bases
  - Treatment of youth with respect and dignity and acknowledging and affirming the youth's rights
  - Feeling that the decision-makers care about their well-beings and the impact of their decisions

- Communicate next steps and expectations following release clearly, to youth, families, providers, parole agents, DJJ staff and others responsible for ensuring a youth returns home and stays home successfully. As referenced herein, a clear and concrete caseplan which supports a youth from the institution and throughout aftercare can greatly help in communicating conditions, expectations and next steps to all the individual involved in a youth's successful reentry.

- Operate with transparency and accountability: As indicated above, the criteria or reasons for parole decisions or a decision to continue to incarcerate a youth are not documented clearly, are not reviewable, are not subject to checks and balances. Data regarding these decisions, the reasons for them and the outcomes of youth following release decisions does not appear to be gathered, shared or analyzed. This lack of transparency and accountability not only affects individual youth and families, but also hampers efforts to improve policy, practice and programming for the benefit of all Illinois communities.

Principle 4: Staying Out (Reducing Returns to Institutions):

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[15] Legitimacy in Corrections, Tom R. Tyler, New York University, American Society of Criminology, Criminology & Public Policy, Volume 9, Issue 1 (2010)
[16] Id, quoting Sparks, Bottoms and Hay (1996)
[17] Id

Youth outcomes and public safety are compromised when youth are returned from placement to their communities without the support needed to avoid reoffending and achieve positive outcomes. Given that a primary purpose of a juvenile corrections system is to return youth home safely and successfully, reincarceration of youth for parole violations – particularly for technical violations of the conditions of release – represents a system failure. Illinois stakeholders must examine all admission, intake, institutional, release decision and aftercare policy, practice and programming to ensure they facilitate, and not create obstacles to, successful reentry.

Correctional research clearly illustrates that punishment alone – including the risks of sanctions and reincarceration itself -- has not been demonstrated to produce lasting reductions in risk or recidivism, particularly for youth, who often lack the developmental capacity to weigh long and short term costs / benefits of behavior, particularly and make rational decisions .[18] Moreover, reincarceration of youth for parole violations is a costly, disruptive and often counter-productive approach to youth crime, increasing recidivism among lower risk offenders.

If punishment and surveillance are ineffective in changing behavior and producing positive outcomes, what works? Fortunately, there is clear evidence that a strong continuum of constructive supervision strategies, support networks, community connections, services and pro-social activities provides the youth with the best chances of successful reentry. Individualized caseplanning which builds on the skills and strengths developed through institutional services, utilizes evidence-based service strategies and maximizes family engagement will produce the most positive results for Illinois youth and their home communities. Illinois must shift scarce resources from counter-productive reliance on punishment and toward policy and programming demonstrated to be effective in reducing juvenile offending and the flow of youth into the adult criminal justice system. To increase reliance on effective intervention strategies, the collaborative recommends:

- Utilize Evidence-based approaches: In a model system, policy and practice are developed in accordance with research on proven strategies to reduce recidivism and enhance youth outcomes by minimizing intrusion with low-risk youth, allocating more resources to higher-risk youth and utilizing evidence-based services, as described previously in this report. As discussed above, effective interventions focus on risk, need, responsivity and building youth protective factors and strengths. These effective approaches also have, at their foundations, three key components:[19]
  - Social learning theory, which recognizes that all people acquire attitudes, values, knowledge and behavior from the other people around them
  - Cognitive-behavioral models, which utilized structured, proven approaches that teach youth new ways of thinking about and behaving in their communities; and
  - Family-based strategies that teach families new ways of interacting with each other, solving problems, addressing conflicts and supporting youth.

- Respect, support and engage families: Families care about their youth. An effective juvenile justice system respects families, acknowledges their perspectives and expertise and fully engages families as partners in positive youth outcomes. Institutional and aftercare policy and practices must be founded upon intentional, respectful engagement of families, given that even older youth are likely to remain in or return to their families or extended families when they leave placement. Keeping families connected to youth while in facilities, encouraging phone calls, visits and the use of technology such as internet visitation, can make reentry easier and more successful. Communicating with and planning with families about what will happen with youth is critical to preventing youth from entering or penetrating the juvenile justice system.

[18] Latessa
[19] Id

Developing individualized caseplans which articulate and intentionally build upon the strengths in the youth's family – as well as address family needs or risks, when possible – will foster positive outcomes and reduced recidivism. Assessment tools and caseplanning must provide a profile of the role family, community and peers play in a youth's positive and negative attitudes, values, priorities and behavior and constructive plans to build on strengths and address needs of the family in relation to the youth. Engaging families during caseplanning and throughout the juvenile justice system – through – through strategies such as youth and family conferences like those conducted at the Washington DC New Beginnings facility – will produce the best outcomes.

Some families will need services – sometimes intensive services – to meet the needs of juvenile-justice-involved youth. Scarce fiscal resources should be directed to evidence-based programs such as Functional Family Therapy (FFT), MultiSystemic Therapy (MST), Family Integrative Therapy (FIT) and Multidimensional Therapeutic Foster Care (MTFC) to meet the needs of these families, reduce risk of reoffending and re-incarceration and to build positive outcomes for youth, families and communities.

- Continuity of care: As discussed in this report, effective aftercare planning and preparation begins at intake and continues throughout a youth's stay in placement and at community reentry.
    - ◦ Emphasis on community-based services: Strong partnerships with a continuum of culturally- competent, easily-accessible, community-based service providers – including those providing mental and behavioral health services – are critical components of a model aftercare system. In the Washington DC Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services, DYRS contracts with regional "lead entity" agencies to identify and partner with a range of community-based service providers to work directly with youth and families as part of a local service coalition.

In this model, the lead agency is responsible for the following:

- Care coordination: The lead agency staff consistently attends youth and family team meetings, coordinates with the case manager (a DYSR employee) to identify and understand an individual youth's needs, strengths and goals and presents information on the services available through the service coalition which may meet those individual needs. The lead agency then enrolls the youth in services and activities in his community.
- Monitoring service agencies and administering funding: The lead entity monitors the services provided by coalition agencies and pays providers (in this case on a fee for service basis) for the work they do with youth and families.
- Community engagement: The lead entity and service coalition members also work closely with community members to build and maintain a support network for youth in their communities.

The providers in the "service coalition" are capable of and willing to provide a range of services, including:

- Intensive Third Party Monitoring (described in the "supervision" section, below);
- Programs to foster social attachment and belonging;
- Educational services and support;
- Organized activities and skill acquisition;
- Work and employment;
- Personal expression;
- Physical activity and recreation; and
- Civic engagement.

- Balancing supervision and support: Aftercare caseplans must appropriately balance supervision, support, services and responses to relapse or misconduct which are appropriate for individual youth treatment and developmental needs. Currently, with the exception of Region 1 (Cook, Will, Lake and Kane Counties), youth are supervised by adult parole officers with little or no training and support in supervising juveniles effectively and using services and strategies to effectively reduce recidivism and facilitate successful community reintegration. In all regions of the state, a severe lack of community based services for youth leaving DJJ

custody poses a critical barrier to positive youth outcomes and positive job performance by the current parole officers.

Some opportunities are emerging. For example, DJJ plans to hire and pilot new Youth and Family Specialists to provide juvenile-focused supervision and support with ARRA funds, for youth in Region 1. Position descriptions, training and protocols are in development. Taking this model to scale, if it proves successful in Region 1, will be important to meet the needs of youth across the state. In addition, DJJ is currently piloting the Washington State "Core Treatment Model," with the assistance of Dr. Eric Trupin, at its IYC Chicago facility (Models for Change Core Grant). Taking the model to scale, if it proves successful at IYC Chicago, will be challenging, but necessary to meet the needs of youth in other facilities. State stakeholders have partially implemented Medicaid and Title IV-E claiming mechanisms to maximize the state's share of federal resources and, ideally, to use these funds to expand the range of aftercare services available to youth. DHS has also been awarded a federal 2nd Chance application to access federal funds to pilot the FIT program in Region 1 to provide intense, evidence-based, family-focused reentry services to youth with dually-occurring mental health and substance abuse needs returning from DJJ facilities to homes in Region 1. A small number of community-based providers / jurisdictions have expressed interest in piloting reentry services for youth leaving DJJ and in becoming certified to provide and bill for Medicaid and IV-E supported services.

In summary, there are a number of promising efforts to develop an effective aftercare planning and reentry approach, but these efforts are often "ad hoc," coordinated by varied entities and agencies, and supported by varied funding sources as opportunities arise. To be effective in building a cohesive, sustainable, effective aftercare continuum – we must shore up, expand, unite and coordinate these efforts and develop statewide policy and practice which melds effective supervision and effective service strategies.

Effective community-based supervision does not rely primarily on surveillance or enforcement of technical conditions of parole, but instead utilizes strategies to help youth utilize new skills in the community. The National Institute of Corrections has described eight principles of effective community-based supervision which can reduce risk of reoffending and reincarceration, including:[20]

- Assess and address the youth's individual risk levels, as described above
- Enhance a youth's motivation to succeed using strategies such as Motivational Interviewing
- Target the right type of interventions to match a youth's specific needs
- Focus on modeling, teaching, practicing and reinforcing new skills with youth
- Rely primarily on positive reinforcement and incentives, instead of sanctions
- Engage community supports and networks to sustain positive changes
- Measure progress and adjust interventions accordingly
- Provide feedback to youth on their progress and next steps

Effective supervision does not equate with intense surveillance and does not rely upon reincarceration as a primary behavior change tool. For example, in Washington DC, the Division of Youth Rehabilitative Services which is responsible for their juvenile corrections facility and aftercare, does not rely upon probation or parole officers to supervise youth in the community. Instead "intensive community-based supervision" is one of the services for which DYRS relies upon community-based service providers. DYRS practitioners note that, once youth are connected to an appropriate continuum of culturally- competent, easily-accessible, community-based service providers – including those providing recreational opportunities for youth -- the need for intensive surveillance by parole or probation offiers to ensure compliance with conditions of release declines significantly. Even so, the Washington DC model of supervision can provide for up to three contacts per day, to the youth's home, neighborhood, school or workplace, conducted not by a parole agent, but by the youth's Intensive Third Party Monitor (ITPM), who works for a community-based agency and is responsible for monitoring a youth's compliance. Additionally, DYRS has developed mechanisms to deemphasize the use of reincarceration or threat thereof to force short-term compliance and instead emphasize the use of incentives to encourage positive behaviors and graduated sanctions to respond to relapse or minor infractions while teaching new skills to avoid

[20] National Institute of Corrections,

continued infractions and misconduct. In this model, strategies to address relapse are not identified and implemented solely by the supervisors of youth, but instead are developed in multi-disciplinary team meetings which involve youth and families, whenever possible.

- Restoring youth to full citizenship: Support for youth to expunge juvenile records, access educational opportunities, obtain employment and maintain stable housing are fundamental to an individual's full citizenship, with real opportunities to care for themselves, support their families and contribute to the community.

Principle 5 – Accountability

Just as youth must accept responsibility for their actions and the harm caused by juvenile delinquency, communities also have obligations to youth to safeguard their welfare, support them when in need and help them to become healthy adults. The juvenile justice system must foster youth accountability while reflecting society's collective responsibility to our youth and must be accountable for the outcomes it produces. To do so, the Collaborative recommends and notes:[21]

Youth accountability: Youth must have constructive, meaningful opportunities to understand the harm anti-social behavior and crime cause in their communities, to be accountable for that harm and to repair that harm in ways which foster long-term connections to their communities. Effective interventions utilize a cognitive-behavioral approach to help youth understand how their behaviors affect others, to take responsibility for their own decisions and to help them adopt healthy, pro-social ways of thinking and behaving in communities.
Restorative justice practices are also effective in engaging crime victims and communities, holding youth accountable and repairing the harm caused by juvenile crime.

Community accountability: Communities must take active roles in and be accountable for articulating and meeting the needs of youth and families. Community members and leaders must hold themselves accountable for the successful outcomes of all youth, including those involved in the juvenile justice system. Parents, community members and community leaders must collaborate to create and maintain effective local governance structures which inform development of fair and effective local policy, practice and programming. Local stakeholders must gather, analyze and use data to guide their policy, practice and programming decisions and must adjust those approaches to ensure positive outcomes for youth and families. Local stakeholders must share accurate local data – in a timely manner – with state systems and stakeholders to inform and guide state-level policy, practice and program development.

System accountability: An effective juvenile justice system measures the outcomes of the youth, families and communities it serves, shared these outcomes with state and local stakeholders and is accountable for adjusting policy, practice and programs to produce positive outcomes for youth, families and communities. Systems and stakeholders must establish and communicate clear, youth-focused performance goals and must measure the progress of individual youth and youth in the aggregate toward these goals. Illinois' juvenile justice systems must operate with transparency and in collaboration with other child-serving agencies, organizations and advocates. Child-serving agencies and entities must provide accurate, timely and complete data regarding the youth committed to its care and the outcomes achieved to state and local stakeholders and decision-makers must use this data to guide policy decisions, program development and resource allocation.

Investing wisely: Effective juvenile justice system invests resources in proven, cost-effective strategies which reduce reoffending and re-incarceration and produce positive outcomes for youth and communities. In an effective system, decision-makers understand and have access to current information about effective juvenile justice policy and practice. In times of fiscal crisis, states and communities cannot afford to spend scarce funds on approaches without proven track records in long term public safety, reduced recidivism, positive behavior changes and positive outcomes for youth, families and communities. State and local stakeholders must

[21] Principles of a Fair, Effective Juvenile Justice System, as adopted by the Illinois Juvenile Justice Commission, July 2010

intentionally rely upon research and information on "what works" when making juvenile justice policy, practice and programming decisions.

Measuring outcomes: An effective juvenile justice system provides information on the outcomes and cost efficacy of policy and practice to stakeholders, community members, practitioners and advocates and others. State and local stakeholders must measure, analyze and communicate the costs and benefits – including positive youth outcomes, youth recidivism and returns to juvenile or adult institutions – of potential and existing policies and practices. State and local stakeholders must adjust policy, practice and programming to ensure investment of resources in cost effective approaches to achieving positive outcomes for youth and families.

Conclusion: Enhancing the continuum of community-based resources available to youth, families and the juvenile justice professional who work with them could reducing the DJJ population at the "front door" and thus allow DJJ to focus more effective, targeted interventions to higher-risk youth as described in this report. This, in turn, could improve successful returns of youth to their communities reduce returns to facilities for parole violations and reoffending. Reducing reincarceration could allow facility closures (especially of aging and decrepit facilities) and reinvestment of cost savings in new services, training and support for DJJ staffers to fulfill the fundamental agency mission and improve outcomes for youth and families across the state.