Job Training for Youth with Justice Involvement: A Toolkit

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About the National Youth Employment Coalition

For 40 more than years, the National Youth Employment Coalition (NYEC) has worked toward an America in which all young people are supported and prepared to become thriving members of our economy and society, regardless of their race, gender, ability, geography, or means. We bring together more than 75 organizations, which reach hundreds of thousands of young people annually, that focus on empowering young people to transition to postsecondary education and employment. Since its inception, NYEC has strengthened hundreds of youth-serving organizations and influenced dozens of pieces of federal legislation related to disadvantaged youth. Learn more at www.nyec.org.

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Preface

NYEC began planning and initial drafting of this toolkit in early 2020, before our country was shaken first by the onset of COVID-19, the subsequent economic collapse, and then by the murder of George Floyd. Each of these tragedies in their own way points up ills of our society that disproportionately affect youth with justice involvement: difficulties entering and sustaining employment, limited access to healthcare, and exposure to police violence. Experience has taught us that the long-term scarring effects of economic downturns fall particularly hard on younger workers. Furthermore, youth with justice involvement, who are disproportionately Black and other people of color, will face the dual challenges of overcoming the stigma of court-involvement and racism. Strong partnerships that connect youth with justice involvement to jobs and training have never been more urgent. We hope that this toolkit can contribute to that work.

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Executive Summary

Youth with justice involvement face a complex web of bias, racial discrimination, and structural barriers that prevent them from living healthy and productive lives. The federally funded workforce-development system has the potential to help these youth become economically self-sufficient and increase their chances of success – and has a statutory mandate to serve the hardest-to-serve young people. Collaboration among workforce partners, courts, and the various agencies that make up the juvenile-justice system can create an ecosystem of alternatives that keep young people safe in their community.

This toolkit, directed at practitioners and leaders in the juvenile-justice system and others with limited familiarity with the workforce development system:

- Outlines evidence-based practices in youth workforce development,
- Provides an overview of the workforce system funded under the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA),
- Makes recommendations for how to make WIOA-funded services work better for youth with justice involvement at the local level, and
- Lays out some key steps to forming effective interagency partnerships.

These ideas are illustrated by success stories from around the country.

Evidence-Based Practices for Working with Youth with Justice Involvement

- Engagement and Empowerment. A positive youth development lens invites us to see young people as individuals with the potential for agency, good decision-making, and leadership. But youth with justice involvement are likely to have been subject to a variety of decisions and actions in which they have had little voice or choice. To prevent this cycle from continuing, adults should meet youth where they are developmentally and have an acknowledgement that, through power-sharing and authentic partnership, youth will be more likely internalize habits and practices that will put them on a path for a healthy and productive life. Authentic engagement begins with asking "What happened to you?" rather than "What's the matter with you?" Authentic power-sharing means establishing trust and putting the youth in driver's seat. In this way, they can become their own best advocates, growing in skills and demonstrating that they have the capacity to be productive and constructive members of society.

- Blended Education and Occupational Training. One of the major barriers facing youth with justice involvement is relatively low levels of academic achievement, which can require intensive tutoring and instruction. Research suggests, however, that blended approaches with literacy and numeracy taught in combination or in the context of

occupational training or employment are likely to produce the best outcomes, since participants can see the connections between the classroom and the workplace.

- The Power of Paid Work. Many youth with justice involvement have few, if any, financial resources and may not have family members on whom they can rely for food and shelter. These young people cannot afford to volunteer, take unpaid internships, or engage in some of the job-search behaviors on which more privileged young people rely. Involving youth with justice involvement in paid work, service, or other employment-related activity as soon as practicable is a key to success. Examples of successful approaches include wage-subsidized internships; stipends for community service; and transitional jobs, which are time-limited subsidized work experiences that help establish a work history and develop skills to access unsubsidized employment.

Many youth returning from incarceration won't be ready for jobs or training. But with blended experiences designed to stabilize their lives and change their modes of thinking they can eventually master the skills they need to succeed in education and employment.

Hector Rivera, Our Piece of the Pie, Hartford, Conn.

- Managing Access to Support Services. Youth with justice involvement are likely to need an array of support services to find healing and stable connection to the workforce. These may include counseling to address issues of trauma, health care, transportation, housing, and the like. Even if youth are aware that they are eligible, accessing services can be difficult. Case managers or program navigators who are steeped in local service offerings can help young people understand what services they are eligible for, how to access them, and how to navigate and manage service delivery.

- Connections to Caring Adults. The ability to re-establish trust is essential for youth with justice involvement. While there are few rigorous evaluations, the consensus of practitioners is that well-designed and implemented mentoring programs have the potential to build trust and produce other positive outcomes, such as increasing social capital, even for young people with significant challenges and barriers[1]. These connections may come from relationships with a variety of caring adults, beginning with members of the family or the community. They may also include probation and parole officers and staff at community-based organizations with appropriate training in positive youth development principles.

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[1] See https://nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org/

How WIOA Support Evidence-Based Practices?

The good news is that youth programming funded by WIOA can support relevant activities in each of these categories. As USDOL states in its WIOA Youth Program Fact Sheet, funds are available to the workforce system "to deliver a comprehensive array of youth services that focus on assisting out-of-school youth and in-school youth with one or more barriers to employment prepare for post-secondary education and employment opportunities, attain educational and/or skills training credentials, and secure employment with career/promotional opportunities."[2]

Most youth with justice involvement are deemed out-of-school youth (OSY) for WIOA eligibility purposes. WIOA directs at least 75% of WIOA youth-services funding to be spent on this population. See Section III of this toolkit for more detail on WIOA eligibility and operations.

For eligible young people, WIOA access to 14 statutorily required elements, which specifically address most of the effective practices associated with employment success for youth with justice involvement. Some of the most relevant include:

- **Educational activities** such as tutoring, study skills, dropout prevention and reengagement, and alternative educational programming, including education offered concurrently with occupational training.
- **Employment-related activities** such paid and unpaid work experience, and occupational skills training.
- **Leadership development and mentoring.**
- **Supportive and follow-up services**, including counseling and guidance.
- **Postsecondary preparation** and transition.

Finally, the U.S Department of Labor encourages workforce development boards to serve harder-to-serve youth and allows for adjustments in performance measures to account for economic conditions.

What Changes to WIOA Would Help Youth with Justice Involvement?

There are several common recommendations for how the workforce-development system can better serve the hardest-to-serve young people.

Allow for self-attestation. States and local areas may allow young people to "self-attest," or certify that they meet certain eligibility criteria for WIOA services – rather than requiring documentation. These could include an individual certifying that they are a person with a disability, that they are not in school, or that they are pregnant or parenting. In June 2020

USDOL issued landmark guidance laying out exactly which data elements may be collected with self-attestation.[3]

Renegotiate performance targets. Under WIOA, state workforce development boards negotiate targets based on WIOA's performance measures with USDOL. States, in turn, negotiate targets with local workforce development boards. USDOL acknowledges that serving harder-to-serve young people, such as youth with justice involvement, may mean fewer young people are served or other performance measures decline (see Appendix B for more information on USDOL's position). State and local workforce boards may renegotiate their targets to accommodate serving youth with justice involvement. Similarly, the number of program participants, and their outcomes, do not need to continually increase; serving the young people who most need services should dictate appropriate performance targets.

Leverage workforce board discretion. State and local workforce development boards have an extensive list of statutorily mandated members. Still, workforce leaders have much discretion in who fills these roles. They should strategically pursue mandated members who want to assist youth with justice involvement. With interested private sector leaders on a board, for instance, a local workforce development board may be able to reduce barriers at the local level, such as urging local employers to narrowly tailor background checks or remove irrelevant educational requirements from job descriptions.

Seek WIOA waivers. The Secretary of Labor has broad discretion to waive WIOA requirements.[4] Local areas may petition states, and states may petition USDOL, for waivers that make it easier to serve system-involved young people. Waivers that may assist system-involved young people include:

- Counting all youth with involvement in the justice or child-welfare system, whether enrolled in school or not, as out-of-school youth for the purposes of WIOA, to create more incentives for their enrollment by service providers.[5]
- Providing youth services in a local area that are focused on effective strategies for system-involved young people (such as transitional jobs), rather than the 14 services required under WIOA.
- Increasing wage reimbursements for employers providing on-the-job training opportunities to youth with system experience.

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[3] Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 23-19, U.S Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration, https://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/attach/TEGL/TEGL_23-19.pdf
[4] WIOA waiver from U.S Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration, https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/wioa/waivers
[5] Los Angeles received a waiver under the Performance Partnership Pilots authority along these lines, which allowed providers to consider foster, homeless, and runaway youth who are attending school to be counted as out-of-school youth for fiscal accounting purposes. P3 Waiver List, https://youth.gov/sites/default/files/P3-Waiver-List-FINAL_2018-12-10.pdf

- Modifying performance measures for state or local workforce development boards to encourage serving system-involved youth, such as by lengthening the windows for achieving different positive outcomes.
Blending dollars among different WIOA programs, with appropriate guardrails, to serve system-involved young people more easily.

Strategies to Build Partnerships and Connect Systems

For decades, policymakers have touted cross-agency partnerships as effective vehicles for improving the coordination and delivery of all kinds of public programs, such as juvenile justice and education; education and workforce development; and workforce and child welfare. By collaborating, agencies can plan and deliver services comprehensively, realize efficiencies, target scarce resources, and improve services for people who need them. Yet, despite their potential to benefit young people, many agencies find it difficult to create effective partnerships. Why?

Human-services systems are very complex, often authorized and funded by a variety of federal, state, and sometimes local statutes. Though related, recommended programmatic interventions are likely to vary across systems, and differing performance measures often necessitate the creation of discrete data-management systems to track and report on results for each. These population-specific programs were created to ensure people receive the services they need and deserve, but often the specificity of these solutions, including their separate eligibility, programmatic, and outcome criteria, challenge coordination and collaboration.

What Characteristics Do Effective Partnerships Share?

While all partnerships are specific to their context and on-the-ground realities, research, and practice over the last decade[6] have identified several characteristics of effective partnerships. These can be summarized as follows:

- **Identify individuals** within potential partner organizations **key to accomplishing potential shared tasks**, *and* who are **willing and able to work collaboratively**.

- Work with these individuals to **define the goals of the partnership**, specify measures of success, and build a common commitment to achieving them.

- Identify and **cultivate key players** in the partnership, who may include:
  - Leaders in each agency who can serve as champions;

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[6] Drawn from research including:
- The Partnering Initiative. *12 steps towards successful cross-sector partnership.*
- Rosenblum, Elyse. *6 Steps to Ensure Successful Cross-Sector Partnerships*, Grads of Life, 2016.
- Allen, Lili. *Mobilizing a Cross-Sector Collaborative for Systemic Change*, JFF, 2010.
- *Scaling Up School and Community Partnerships*, Melaville, Jacobson, and Blank, 2011.
- Corcoran, Mimi, et al. *Collective Impact for Opportunity Youth*, FSG, 2012.

- o Staff who have expertise in, or an affinity for, making connections across programs and agencies;
- o Staff throughout each agency whose work will be affected by the partnership;
- o Staff who have access to and authority to use or allocate agency resources;
- o As appropriate, staff who have access to the data the partnership needs to plan and track results; and
- o Potential "challengers" to the partnership, who need to be brought onboard.
- In cases where staff or agencies do not have a history of working together, take the time to **build knowledge and trust**, learning each other's contexts, priorities, and languages.

- Agree on **written ground rules** for the partnership, such as strategies for ensuring communication among partners and confidentiality protocols for reviewing data.

- Share available **cross-system data** on target populations, with an eye toward identifying the needs of and potential benefits for individuals served by partner agencies.

- Based on the partnership's goals and findings from shared data analyses, develop **specific work plans with measurable outcomes and timelines** which advance the work of both the partnership and its individual members.

- In pursuing **shared goals and strategies**, expect to recalibrate work plans and tactics based on experience, changing staff and leaders, and evolving contexts.

- Put in writing, through **Memoranda of Understanding** (MOU) or Agreement (MOA) the roles and responsibilities of each partner to secure a stable and continuous partnership, regardless if administration in any agency should change.

- **Measure and evaluate results** (including how well the partners interact), acknowledging both successes and areas where additional work is needed.

- **Celebrate successes**, distribute credit for achievements to reward and reinforce participation, and plan for scaling up and forming new collaborations.

To facilitate coordination, some effective partnerships rely on the leadership of a **neutral intermediary or convening organization**. Regardless, partners do not need to agree on everything—only on specific goals and the strategies to accomplish them.

What Are Key Steps that Officials in the Juvenile-Justice and Workforce-Development Systems Can Take?

Section V details specific steps that officials in the juvenile-justice and workforce-development systems can take to create effective partnerships. A sample of these efforts includes:

- Recognize that workforce development should exist along the continuum of options for youth with system experience in place of secure confinement or residential placement and alongside aftercare/parole.
- Elected officials can play a key role in convening systems and organizing success measures around community impact rather than individual systems.
- Coordinate WIOA enrollment to maximize eligibility to determine best times to enroll youth with system experience.
- Offer on-site training programming within residential facilities.
- Provide pre-release services and relationship building while young people navigate returning home while still in placement.

Collaboration Is Critical; Siloes Are Not an Option

Collaboration between juvenile justice and workforce development systems can achieve better outcomes for young people, result in more efficient use of public dollars, and make the efforts of officials in both systems more effective. These are powerful motivators, as is the fact that WIOA intentionally and explicitly calls for the workforce-development system to serve the most challenged and disconnected young people. The U.S. Department of Labor has been steadfast in its reading of WIOA's commitment to these young people. As Sara Hastings of USDOL shared, "The priority population for WIOA Youth Programs is Out-of-School Youth [such as youth with justice involvement]. We encourage programs to adapt their models to best serve these youth, and the legislation makes it easier to prioritize these youth. Programs should develop comprehensive systems of service and put service delivery mechanisms in place to serve those most in need of services." Her full statement can be found in Appendix B.

As the COVID-19 pandemic inflicts lasting damage on young adults' prospects in the job market, there has never been a more important time to seek the kinds of cross-system collaboration described by this toolkit. Hopefully, the ideas, tools, and stories shared here point the way.

Job Training for Youth with Justice Involvement: A Toolkit

This toolkit has two goals. First, it is designed to help staff working in the juvenile justice system to better understand how funding and programs established under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) can improve outcomes for young offenders. Second, it provides information and encouragement to help workforce professionals seek out and enroll youth with justice involvement to their WIOA youth programming. Underlying both goals is the need to build strong, mutually beneficial working partnerships between the juvenile justice and youth workforce systems; this toolkit synthesizes literature on effective interagency partnerships and details several examples of successful partnerships.

As we discuss in the next section, there have been several important publications over the last two decades designed to encourage collaboration between the workforce development and juvenile justice systems. Even so, while increasing numbers of communities are working across systems to blend funds and programs for youth with system experience, far too many continue to struggle to make these connections. This toolkit offers nuts-and-bolts guidance to overcoming common barriers to collaboration, and highlights key ingredients to durable partnerships.

The toolkit is in several parts:

- An **introductory section** highlighting earlier efforts to connect the workforce and juvenile justice systems.
- **A section reviewing effective practices** in reducing recidivism, increasing reengagement, and promoting economic success for youthful offenders, followed by **a discussion of how WIOA funds can support these approaches.**
- **An overview of relevant WIOA provisions**, including a section on eligibility underscoring that *most, if not all, youth with justice involvement are eligible for WIOA services.*
- **Recommendations for how WIOA can be used to better support youth with justice involvement**, which either staff of the juvenile-justice or workforce-development system can take up at the local level.
- **A section discussing strategies for building effective partnerships** across systems, which widely believed to be essential to long-term successful collaboration, and also detailing other specific approaches to collaboration.
- Throughout the document, **highlights of successful efforts in several communities and states** to build powerful connections between juvenile justice and workforce development systems.

In this toolkit, we hope to offer local officials and practitioners the information they need and concrete steps they can take to begin and sustain cross-system collaboration.

I. Introduction and Context

a. Background

Juvenile arrests and incarceration grew rapidly in the 1980s and 1990s, fueled in part by false, racist fears that the nation would be overcome by a coming generation of "super predators" and a youth "crime time bomb" was inevitable.[7] Alarmed by inhumane conditions in youth correctional and detention facilities, and by the racial disparities in which young people were sentenced to secure confinement, advocates began to identify and implement more effective alternatives to juvenile incarceration. Support by a number of philanthropies, including the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the MacArthur Foundation, they partnered with states, local governments, and community organizations to change attitudes, practices, and ultimately policies. As a result of reform efforts like these, and a decline in juvenile crime, juvenile incarceration fell by approximately 60 percent nationally between 1997 and 2015.[8]

In addition to keeping youthful offenders out of secure facilities, advocates and practitioners also began to focus on treatments, supports, and experiences that local systems could provide to maximize the likelihood that youth with justice involvement would stay on track, whether in community-based alternative programs or after release from incarceration. The menu of programs and services is long and varied, but many concluded that preparing these young people for self-sufficient employment was at or near the top of the list. And achieving this goal, at a minimum, would require collaboration and support across the juvenile justice and workforce development systems.

One of the first and most ambitious attempts to identify how these connections might be made was the U.S. Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention's (OJJDP) comprehensive study *Employment and Training for Court-Involved Youth* (2000), whose stated purpose was to "engage policymakers and juvenile justice and workforce development practitioners in working collaboratively to remove the barriers that preclude court-involved youth from participation in the workforce."[9] Noting that "a major developmental task of adolescence is preparing for economic self-sufficiency in adulthood," and that "youth need to learn how to be productive," the report includes overviews of several youth-related systems, identifies barriers to success, and suggests several approaches which can help to address them. The study ultimately led to the launch in the

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[7] Urban Institute, "The Rise and Fall of American Youth Violence: 1980 to 2000," http://www.yapinc.org/Portals/0/Documents/Fact%20Sheets/Connecting%20Systems.pdf
[8] Child Trends: Juvenile Incarceration, https://www.childtrends.org/indicators/juvenile-detention#:~:text=Overall%2C%20rates%20of%20juvenile%20incarceration,to%20be%20in%20residential%20placement.
[9] U.S. Department of Justice Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention's (OJJDP), "Employment and Training for Court-Involved Youth," https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/182787.pdf

early 2000s of the Re-Integration of Ex-Offenders (RExO) Program, now known as the Reentry Employment Opportunities (REO) Program.[10] [11]

Two more influential reports emerged in the following years. In 2002, the Annie E. Casey Foundation released *Barriers and Promising Approaches to Workforce and Youth Development for Young Offenders: A Toolkit,* which highlighted the successful efforts of states and 15 communities to develop collaborative approaches.[12] In 2006, the Center for Law and Social Policy (CLASP) released *Making the Juvenile Justice – Workforce Development Connection for Re-entering Young Offenders: a Guide for Local Practice*, also based on practitioner experience, which argued for coordinated, cross-system efforts and identified strategies to overcome barriers to collaboration.[13]

This is not a bleeding-heart operation. These young people will be coming back to their communities and we need to get them ready to participate in the economy and able to build their own prosperity.

Cheryl Fambles, Pacific Mountain Workforce Development Council, Western Washington State

More recently, other publications have continued to urge coordinated approaches, including a 2017 American Youth Policy Forum brief entitled, "Supporting Pathways to Long-Term Success for System-Involved Youth: Lessons Learned," which identified strategies key to success in postsecondary education, training, and careers for youth with system experience.[14] And in February 2020, CLASP and FHI360 produced a report on how nine communities are working to connect young adults returning from placement to work, education, and training pathways as a way to break the cycle of recidivism.[15]

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[10] Social Policy Research Associates, "Evaluation of the Re-integration of Ex-Offenders (RexO) Program: Final Impact Report," https://wdr.doleta.gov/research/FullText_Documents/ETAOP-2015-10_The-Evaluation-of-the-Re-Integration-of-Ex-Offenders-%28RExO%29-Program-Final-Impact-Report_Acc.pdf
[11] See Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration: Reentry Employment Opportunities, https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/reentry
[12] Annie E. Casey Foundation, "Barriers and Promising Approaches to Workforce and Youth Development for Young Offenders: A Toolkit," http://www.yapinc.org/Portals/0/Documents/Fact%20Sheets/Connecting%20Systems.pdf
[13] Center for Law and Social Policy, "Making the Juvenile Justice- Workforce System Connection for Re-Entering Young Offenders," https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED494129.pdf
[14] American Youth Policy Forum, "Supporting Pathways to Long-Term Success for Systems-Involved Youth: Lessons Learned," http://www.aypf.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Brief-Supporting-Pathways-to-Long-Term-Success.pdf
[15] Center for Law and Social Policy & FHI 360, "From Striving to Thriving: Supporting Transformation, Reentry, and Connections to Employment for Young Adults," https://www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/resource-crc-surviving-thriving.pdf

In addition, the U.S. Department of Labor issued a technical assistance document that provides strategies and examples of state and local partnerships that facilitate the reengagement of out-of-school youth, including wraparound supports, social and workforce skills, and college and career readiness.[16]

In sum, there are numerous reports and guidance documents that promote connections between the juvenile justice and workforce systems. But while some communities have found ways to work together (see some examples of success stories throughout this toolkit), in too many areas the systems operate with little connection, resulting in lost opportunities.

b. Barriers to Collaboration

Why haven't we been able to make more progress? The simple answer is, despite having many similar goals and a common commitment to the rehabilitation and preparation of young people in their charge, making connections across systems is hard work. The challenges present in two areas: barriers faced by individual young people, and the differing cultures and priorities of the workforce and juvenile justice systems.

- Individual Challenges of Young People. After being released from secure confinement or other residential facilities, youth with justice experience face a multitude of linked systemic barriers ranging from: discrimination in the workplace upon re-entry, based on their system involvement or race; lack of access to adequate trauma and mental health supports; predatory, for-profit education schemes; and inadequate transportation in low-income communities. Many of these youth also already have experienced poor educational preparation and limited or no work experience. They may even be released into communities far from their original home, compounding barriers. It's important that workforce agencies acknowledge these barriers and offer supportive services to effectively serve youth with justice involvement in their programs.

It's an ongoing challenge: the paradigm of youth incarceration is very different from the theory of workforce development. Together we can find the best outcomes for students and our society.

Cheryl Fambles

- Culture and Priorities of Systems. Workforce and juvenile justice systems may have different philosophies, mindsets, and terminology, which can stand in the way of collaboration. Workforce practitioners may not have a strong understanding of how courts, probation, and aftercare/parole interact around decisions on youths' diversion, sentencing, tenure, release, mandates, or ongoing surveillance. Juvenile justice officials may question whether the workforce system is equipped to deal

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[16] Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration: Reentry Employment Opportunities, "Supporting the Educational and Career Success of Justice-Involved Youth under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)," https://youth.workforcegps.org/-/media/Communities/youth/Files/FINAL,-d-,EKFA,-d-,justice.ashx

with the serious issues many youth with justice involvement present, whether providers can overcome employers' stigma around hiring these young people, or whether the performance measure-driven workforce system is interested in serving youth with significant barriers.

There is no blinking at these challenges. But still there are real benefits to both systems in finding ways to collaborate. Specifically, collaboration can result in more efficient and effective use of dollars and better outcomes for young people. In short, it can be a win-win: youth get better services, communities are safer and grow their talent pool, and the systems' jobs get a little easier.

EXAMPLE FROM THE FIELD: Community-Based Organization Drives Systems Change (San Diego County, Calif.)

Quick Take. South Bay Community Services (SBCS) is an example of a **high-functioning community-based organization that partners with justice and workforce systems** in San Diego County to provide a range of education and job-related programming for youth with justice involvement and young adults. Based on these collaborative efforts, for over a decade, 88%- 96% of youth served successfully met service plan goals and remained arrest-free at 6-month follow-up.

Background. South Bay Community Services (SBCS)[17] is a community-based nonprofit organization providing a comprehensive suite of supports for children, youth, and families in San Diego county. SBCS serves youth in nearly all points of justice involvement including diversion, probation, alternative to placement, in county detention centers and facilities and post-release. Founded in 1971 as a drop-in center for teens struggling with drug abuse by providing counseling and rehabilitation, SBCS now serves more than 50,000 residents annually, offering an array of services in nine categories:

- Housing assistance
- Independent living skills
- Employment readiness
- Financial literacy services
- Mental health counseling
- Domestic violence & child abuse intervention
- Juvenile crimes prevention
- Therapeutic educational programming
- Meals and nutritional support

WIOA Support for Justice-Involved Youth. SBCS has utilized federal workforce funds to support its juvenile prevention and intervention services programming since 2004. Today, according to Mauricio Torre, Vice President of Program Operations, Workforce Innovation

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[17] South Bay Community Services is a Annie E. Casey Foundation Learn and Earn to Achieve Potential (LEAP)™ site.

and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funds support roughly 20-25% of SBCS's programs and services for justice-involved youth.

WIOA dollars support three full-time career pathways staff, titled "career coaches," and a part-time coordinator, who work with youth to assess their strengths and interests; help them determine their career goals; identify employer partners and champions; and then develop subsidized internships related to young peoples' career interests.

"Internships are where most of the WIOA funds are invested," Torre explains, "but it's not just wages. Our coaches work hard to build relationships with our employer partners, who are really more like mentors."

Young interns typically work from 120-240 hours and these are often their first experiences in a workplace. Given that challenges can arise due to this inexperience, career coaches meet with employers at least once a month to see how the young interns are doing.

The Importance of Timing and Flexibility. Workforce training is rarely the first option for justice-involved youth. Often, justice-involved youth will have many other needs that must be met before workforce training becomes a viable option.

"For example," explains Torre, "youth in diversion programs who have committed a first offense that's not serious enough for juvenile hall [detention center] could be referred to a SBCS team for a family assessment and support services, including counseling, anger management, and social skill-building. Then, if they make progress and want a job, they can be referred to training and an internship, with support from WIOA."

On the other hand, young people who are being released from juvenile placement are likely to need more in-depth supports, such as stabilization assistance, housing, trauma-informed counseling. "But when they are ready," Torre says, "most also are eager to get training and find a good job and WIOA can pay for training and many related support activities" like skill assessments, tutoring, soft skills development, career exploration, resume-writing and interviewing skills, and training in high-demand occupations, as well as for related expenses like clothes, school supplies, bus passes, state ID, and birth certificates.

"It's also important to be very flexible with programming for system-involved youth," Torre says. SBCS initially adopted a cohort-based model, thinking that connections to peers would be a valuable component. But SBCS learned from experience that youthful offenders needed an individual, tailored approach. According to Torre, "that's harder to manage, but it's what we learned was the best way to connect with system-involved youth."

Partnerships as Essential Building Blocks. Perhaps the most important key to SBCS's successes with justice-involved youth is their extensive network of partnerships across different agencies, and the connections with staff in those offices.

"We've developed these relationships over many years," Torre says, "and there's a level of trust that enables us to work closely together." For example, SBCS staff are stationed in the Chula Vista police department to enroll youth who are deemed appropriate for diversion. "The police officer just walks the paperwork over to our desk," Torre explains, "and we can take it from there." Similarly, SBCS staff have a continuing presence in juvenile hall and work closely with the probation department so that referrals can be made effectively and efficiently.

"If we need to build a new relationship, we see who in our network has a contact there – in probation, in the schools, on the workforce board. And then we ask that s/he set up an appointment where we can all meet and discuss areas of mutual interest."

This level of collaboration and trust has also helped to leverage significant new funding for SBCS's justice-related efforts. For example, the probation department funds "Achievement Centers" which offer services ranging from mental health services and family support services to job training as well as programming for high-risk youth which involves direct community outreach that aligns with and augments probations services. "We have weekly conversations with the police and court officials," Torre says, "from the assistant chief to individual probation officers."

SBCS is also functions as a collective impact backbone organization. Senior SBCS leaders convene and facilitate monthly meetings of senior agency officials from police department, probation, and the schools, as well as major providers of programs and services. Together they review data, set priorities, and establish joint action plans. SBCS also is an active member of the Juvenile Justice Coordinating Council, comprised of the chief of probation, juvenile court judges, and the CEOs of community-based organizations involved in programs for system-involved youth.

"Communication is key," Torre says. "Program thinking won't cut it. You have to make sure everyone has a clear understanding of their roles, duties, expectations, and that they're prepared to respond consistent with the data and trends. That way, we can coordinate our investments and maximize the likelihood of success."

WIOA: Challenges and Rewards. Torre is clear-eyed about the challenges of working with WIOA, particularly for organizations that are not used to dealing with the regulatory strictures that accompany federal funds.

"Organizations that want to seek WIOA funds need to be prepared for the discipline of record-keeping and data management," he says. "If you're not ready for the levels of audit and related scrutiny, it can be a struggle."

On the other hand, SBCS has found WIOA funds to be vital in building and sustaining programming for system-involved youth.

"It took awhile to learn how to navigate the requirements," notes Torre, "but now it's second nature. So, for us, the benefits of using WIOA youth funds in our justice-related programming far outweigh the challenges and we greatly value that investment."

II. What Do We Know About Effective Practices for Youth with Justice Involvement?

Just as challenges can be grouped by individual and systemic barriers, so too can strategies to overcome them. This section outlines effective practices to address individual needs of system-involved young people and how the workforce system, governed by WIOA, can support evidence-informed programs aimed at stabilizing young people and preparing them to enter workforce. A later section addresses creating partnerships across systems.

a. Evidence-Based Practices

The foundational element undergirding effective practices for youth with justice involvement—or all youth for that matter—is **positive youth development**. Simply put, positive youth development is grounded in the idea that young people are most likely to thrive when we see them as assets to be nurtured rather problems to be fixed. Viewed through this lens, even the most challenged young people can overcome major obstacles to live productive lives, if they have the benefit of high-quality programs and services that prepare them for success.

What types of practices have demonstrated success with youthful offenders? Several broad categories emerge from the reports noted in Section II as well as other research over the last two decades.

- Engagement and Empowerment. A positive youth development lens invites us to see young people as individuals with the potential for agency, good decision-making, and leadership. But youth with justice involvement are likely to have been subject to a variety of decisions and actions in which they have had little voice or choice. To prevent this cycle from continuing, adults should meet youth where they are

We know what they [youth] need to build prosperity, but the students know what they want. My Journey Out Beyond seeks to find a winning combination of those two things.

Cheryl Fambles

developmentally and have an acknowledgement that, through power-sharing and authentic partnership, youth will be more likely internalize habits and practices that will put them on a path for a healthy and productive life. Authentic engagement begins with asking "What happened to you?" rather than "What's the matter with you?" Authentic power-sharing means establishing trust and putting the youth in driver's seat. In this way,

they can become their own best advocates, growing in skills and demonstrating that they have the capacity to be productive and constructive members of society.

- Blended Education and Occupational Training. One of the major barriers facing youth with justice involvement is relatively low levels of academic achievement, which can require intensive tutoring and instruction. Research suggests, however, that blended approaches with literacy and numeracy taught in combination or in the context of occupational training or employment are likely to produce the best outcomes, since participants can see the connections between the classroom and the workplace.

- The Power of Paid Work. Many youth with justice involvement have few, if any, financial resources and may not have family members on whom they can rely for food and shelter. These young people cannot afford to volunteer, take unpaid internships, or engage in some of the job-search behaviors on which more privileged young people rely. Involving youth with justice involvement in paid work, service, or other employment-related activity as soon as practicable is a key to success. Examples of successful approaches include wage-subsidized internships; stipends for community service; and transitional jobs, which are time-limited subsidized work experiences that help establish a work history and develop skills to access unsubsidized employment.

- Managing Access to Support Services. Youth with justice involvement are likely to need an array of support services to find healing and stable connection to the workforce. These may include counseling to address issues of trauma, health care, transportation, housing, and the like. Even if youth are aware that they are eligible, accessing services can be difficult. Case managers or program navigators who are steeped in local service offerings can help young people understand what services they are eligible for, how to access them, and how to navigate and manage service delivery.

- Connections to Caring Adults. The ability to re-establish trust is essential for youth with justice involvement. While there are few rigorous evaluations, the consensus of practitioners is that well-designed and implemented mentoring programs have the potential to build trust and produce other positive outcomes, such as increasing social capital, even for young people with significant challenges and barriers.[18] These connections may come from relationships with a variety of caring adults, beginning with members of the family or the community. They may also include probation and parole

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[18] See https://nationalmentoringresourcecenter.org/

officers and staff at community-based organizations with appropriate training in positive youth development principles.

b. How Can WIOA Support Evidence-Based Practices?

The good news is that youth programming funded by WIOA can support relevant activities in each of these categories. As USDOL states in its WIOA Youth Program Fact Sheet, funds are available to the workforce system "to deliver a comprehensive array of youth services that focus on assisting out-of-school youth and in-school youth with one or more barriers to employment prepare for post-secondary education and employment opportunities, attain educational and/or skills training credentials, and secure employment with career/promotional opportunities."[19] See Section III for more detail on WIOA eligibility and operations.

Internships are where most of the WIOA funds are invested, but it's not just wages. Our coaches work hard to build relationships with our employer partners, who are really more like mentors.

Mauricio Torre, South Bay Community Services, San Diego, Calif.

Specifically, WIOA funds can support:

- An **objective assessment** of academic and skill levels, and service needs of each youth participant (including career-related assessments like work history and employability; interests and aptitudes; and supportive services and developmental needs).

- An **individual service strategy**, including the participant's education and employment goals; appropriate achievement objectives that will help lead to goal attainment; and the program elements that will help lead to goal attainment.

- **Access to 14 statutorily required elements**, which specifically address most of the effective practices associated with employment success for youth with justice involvement (elements are provided based on need, as determined by the assessment and individual service strategy). Some of the most relevant include:

  - **Educational activities** such as tutoring, study skills, dropout prevention/ re-engagement, and alternative educational programming, including education offered concurrently with occupational training.

  - **Employment-related activities** such paid and unpaid work experience, and occupational skills training.

  - **Leadership development and mentoring.**

  - **Supportive and follow-up services**, including counseling and guidance.

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[19] U.S Department of Labor Workforce GPS, "WIOA Youth Program Fact Sheet (July 2020)," https://youth.workforcegps.org/resources/2017/08/29/08/48/FactSheet

- o **Postsecondary preparation** and transition.

In short, programming funded by WIOA can support a wide range of evidence-based practices that can help youth with justice involvement get back on track and into the workforce.

EXAMPLE FROM THE FIELD: Leading Community-Based Organization Creates New Opportunities for Youth with Justice Involvement (Hartford, Conn.)

Quick Take. Hartford, Conn., represents a community where **strong executive leadership** and an **outstanding youth-serving intermediary organization** have come together to **create important opportunities for young people** with great potential but who also face barriers associated with involvement in the justice-system, gangs, and other forms of risky behavior.

Background. Our Piece of the Pie (OPP) is one of the nation's leading nonprofit youth-serving organizations. With a 45-year history of empowering young adults in Greater Hartford, OPP contributes to national youth-focused collaboratives like the National Youth Employment Coalition and Communities Collaborating to Reconnect Youth. Recently, OPP has joined the Compass Ross Collaborative, a Department of Labor-funded initiative led by FHI 360.

Overview of OPP Programming. OPP provides a variety of opportunities for young people to receive high-quality education, training, and employment, and to build personal, consistent relationships with staff members. Specifically, OPP offers two program types:

- School-based offerings include the OPPortunity Academy, which reengages over-age, under-credited students in education to prepare them for postsecondary success, and the Learning Academy at Bloomfield, which blends academic requirements with real-world requirements of a job and career.

- Community-based offerings, including Pathways to Careers in high-demand occupations; Hartford Youth Service Corps, which serves high-risk young people who need support in academics, workforce development, and career preparation; and a Youth Business model focused on music, visual arts, and boat-building.

A Focus on Justice-Involved Youth. Consistent with its emphasis on working with the hardest-to-serve youth and young adults, OPP has traditionally recruited, trained, and supported young people involved in the justice system. "Our journey to connect juvenile justice and workforce development has been long," says Hector Rivera, OPP Chief Operating Officer. "Our approach to workforce preparation and job readiness for these young people isn't all that different from other opportunity youth," he says. "However, given their criminal backgrounds, there is a big difference in how they are perceived by employers."

Given this, OPP worked hard to identify networks of employers, as well as individual companies, that are less concerned about young adults with records and will hire them,

provided young people receive appropriate training and support. This analysis produced employment opportunities for youth with system experience in transportation and logistics, manufacturing, and some retail establishments.

OPP also pioneered a "try before you buy" approach, which provided subsidized experiences for youthful offenders so that employers could get to know the young people and see their talent and commitment before formal hiring. Even so, the hiring process isn't easy.

"We had to do a lot of development and training for the employers, as well," says Rivera. "System-involved young adults come with their own array of obstacles and we didn't want employers to be short-sighted or short-tempered, so we had to work with them on tolerance, understanding, and mitigating the barriers these kids face. Too often we put young people in experiences where there's little support and no follow-up. But coaching employers can help make the experience work for everyone."

The Hartford Youth Services Corps. In 2016 OPP partnered with newly elected Mayor Luke Bronin on an initiative to create education and employment opportunities for high-risk youth and young adults, including those who were gang-involved and/or returning from delinquent placement. The mayor had made youth employment a key campaign issue and turned to OPP to help create solutions that could equip more young people for job success.

The result of this collaboration was the Hartford Youth Services Corps, a blended program of service learning, workforce development, and stabilization services. The Corps serves approximately 250 youth each year, providing one-half day of paid work and service experiences specifically designed to improve the community, and a half-day focused on building academic skills. The goal of the Corps is to prepare young people to take the next step in their journeys, either into formal job training, postsecondary education, or employment.[20]

"The Corps is a perfect model for these young people," Rivera explains. "Most simply aren't ready for jobs or training, but the year of blended experiences gives them chances to stabilize their lives and change their behavior and modes of thinking. They learn how to adhere to rules and avoid participating in risky activities."

Near the end of the one-year cycle, Corps staff look carefully at transition services and next steps. "Typically, 15-20 percent aren't yet ready for training or jobs and will stay in the program another year," says Rivera. "But there are also strong leaders who emerge, many of whom are invited to become Ambassadors and function like adjunct staff in the program." Based on positive experiences with the Ambassador program, it is currently being replicated through the Compass Rose Collaborative.

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[20] A similar program called the Civic Justice Corps program was funded via AmeriCorps and WIOA funding.

To-date, almost 1,000 young people have participated in the Corps, which continues to be a mayoral priority. The program is funded almost entirely by private contributions from area employers (primarily insurance companies) and foundations. "The mayor has raised more than $10 million for the Corps," says Rivera. "He picks up the phone … knocks on doors … whatever it takes to find the dollars." As a result, "each year we can continue to make improvements and enhancements."

Other Justice-Related Initiatives. OPP operates two other notable initiatives focused on justice-involved young people.

- The Reentry Welcome Center is a dedicated space for formerly incarcerated individuals who are seeking basic information on programs and resources for which they might be eligible, with particular emphasis on navigation services for individuals who have recently been released to the community within the last 90 days. "Before the Center was created, returning citizens were simply dropped off in downtown Hartford," explains Rivera. But now they are taken to the Center where they receive a special orientation and a brief assessment to gauge their needs and determine next steps, including receiving referrals to community providers for specialized services and supports.
- An Early Warning System supports re-entry for young people returning to their communities from placement. The City of Hartford provided funding to support navigators who work "behind the walls" in eight secure facilities. Each young person who is within 90 days or less of release works with a navigator to design a plan for a smooth transition. Plans may include information and access to health and social services, housing, government identification, connections to education, and transfer of records and data.

III. How Are WIOA Youth Funds Managed and Who is Eligible?

a. Overview

WIOA is the federal government's largest investment in worker preparation and training. At the local level, WIOA funding is overseen by workforce development boards, appointed by local elected officials. A majority of members must come from the private sector.

WIOA's Title I has three separate, "core" programs: adult training, youth activities, and dislocated worker retraining.

Federal dollars are allocated from the U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) to state labor agencies, and then to local workforce development boards. For Fiscal Year 2020, core program appropriations levels are approximately $855 million, $913 million, and $1 billion for adult, youth, and dislocated worker funds, respectively. Youth activities funds are distributed based on a three-part formula, which focuses on 1) relative levels of

unemployment, 2) relative numbers of "disadvantaged youth," and 3) relatively numbers of areas of "substantial unemployment."

In a marked change from previous workforce legislation, which prioritized in-school youth, WIOA requires local workforce boards to spend at least 75 percent of WIOA youth allocations on out-of-school youth, with no more than 25 percent going for in-school youth.

Most local workforce development boards subcontract their youth funding to community-based organizations.[21] Ideally, these organizations have track records of serving disconnected youth with an economic disadvantage with staff who understand and value the principles of positive youth development and appreciate the challenges and trauma youth have experienced. As a result, these individuals and organizations not only provide high-quality education and training, but also the personal connections that research tells us are important in building trust and promoting success.

b. Out-of-School Youth Funding

Language in the statute is designed to make it relatively easy for youth with justice involvement to qualify as out-of-school youth and receive services.

For example, WIOA defines out-of-school youth as individuals who are 16-24-years-old; not attending any school (based on state definitions and requirements); and fall into one of eight categories, including those who are "involved in the juvenile or adult justice system."

Young people who are being released from juvenile placement are likely to need more in-depth supports, but when they are ready, WIOA can pay for training and many related support activities.

Mauricio Torre

Further, section 3 of WIOA uses a broad definition of "offender" to describe justice involvement for eligibility purposes, encompassing any **juvenile or adult** who:

- Is or has been **subject to any stage of the criminal justice process** and for whom services under WIOA may be beneficial; or

- Requires assistance in overcoming artificial barriers to employment resulting from a record of arrest or conviction.

Importantly, **WIOA eligibility is established at the time of enrollment and will not change subsequently even if the participant's school status is altered.** That is, if an individual is enrolled when out-of-school and is subsequently placed in a school-based/educational training program, s/he is still considered out-of-school for the purposes of WIOA funding.

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[21] See Workforce Development Board Finder, https://www.careeronestop.org/LocalHelp/WorkforceDevelopment/find-workforce-development-boards.aspx

This provision can be particularly important for youth who are in delinquent placement and participating in an educational program. In some states, these individuals are considered to be "in-school" because they are still subject to mandatory attendance policies. However, if these young people were enrolled in WIOA as out-of-school youth prior to placement, they would continue to be eligible as out-of-school youth even when participating in education programming inside a facility.

Furthermore, **USDOL guidance makes it clear that local workforce boards are encouraged to co-enroll eligible out-of-school youth in adult programming**, as appropriate. This means that youth with system experience who are 18 or older can not only take advantage of youth-related WIOA programming, but also potentially access training funded through WIOA adult dollars. Young people with disabilities may also qualify for WIOA Title IV, vocational rehabilitation services.

c. In-School Youth Funding

In-school youth eligibility allows services to individuals who are:

- Attending school as defined by State law, including at the secondary or postsecondary levels;
- Not younger than age 14 or older than age 21 at time of enrollment;
- Low-income; and
- In one or more of eight categories, **one of which is "offender."**

In reality, in-school youth funding is scarce in many local areas. With only 25 percent of WIOA Youth funds available for students the demand is high, and some local boards, considering the statutory priority, have decided to focus all their resources on out-of-school populations.

In sum, WIOA funds can serve youth with justice involvement who are still in their communities as well as youth within delinquent placement facilities. With attention to enrollment timing, most justice-involved young people can qualify as out-of-school youth, the priority population for WIOA funding.

d. Performance Measures

WIOA youth programs are subject to several specific performance measures:

- Percentages of participants who have entered unsubsidized employment, education, or training in the second and fourth quarters after program exit;
- For those in unsubsidized employment, median earnings in second quarter after exit;

- For those in education and training, the percentages who have earned a recognized postsecondary credential or high school diploma/equivalent within one year after exit; and

- Percentages of those enrolled in education or training who during a program year have made measurable skill gains, such as an educational functional level or on-the-job training (OJT) completion.

USDOL has recognized that these performance measures will be more challenging for the harder-to-serve youth and young adults who are now priorities for WIOA; see Appendix B for a statement from USDOL on this subject. To encourage local boards to enroll these young people and discourage so-called creaming (or only serving participants who are best prepared to succeed), USDOL considers the economic condition and characteristics of participants when negotiating performance levels, and uses a statistical adjustment model which can calibrate performance based on actual economic conditions. Furthermore, USDOL has acknowledged that services to these young people will cost more money per participant and take more time to achieve success than it would for participants who might need fewer supports.

It took a while to learn how to navigate the requirements, but now it's second nature, and we greatly value the WIOA investment.

Mauricio Torre

e. Reporting Requirements

Organizations unfamiliar with federal reporting requirements may not be prepared for the discipline of record-keeping and data management associated with the use of WIOA funds. The National Skills Coalition created an infographic that describes how WIOA performance data is collected, reported, and used by different players in the system.[22] USDOL's technical assistance website offers a variety of resources on performance reporting and accountability in WIOA.[23] [24]

f. Funding Challenges

Like state and local juvenile justice systems, workforce development programs are substantially under-resourced, and serve only a small fraction of eligible young people. Still,

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[22] See Infographic: How WIOA Performance Data Works, https://www.nationalskillscoalition.org/resources/publications/file/WDQC_WIOA_data_illo_final.pdf
[23] U.S Department of Labor Workforce GPS, WIOA Youth Performance Accountability Webinar, https://www.workforcegps.org/events/2017/09/20/07/16/WIOA-Youth-Performance-Accountability
[24] U.S Department of Labor Workforce GPS, WIOA 2019 Performance Accountability Training Webinar Series, https://performancereporting.workforcegps.org/resources/2019/10/03/20/25/WIOA_2019_Performance_Accountability_Training

in some areas local workforce boards may find it challenging to recruit and enroll out-of-school youth to spend their allocation of funds. In these situations, youth with justice involvement could be seen as an important and valued target population.

On the other hand, in many cases WIOA funding may already be allocated to providers will limited experience with or focus on youth with justice involvement.

In the next section we discuss strategies that can help juvenile justice officials build partnerships and trust that can enhance the prospects of drawing down WIOA dollars for the young people in their charge.

EXAMPLE FROM THE FIELD: Coordinated Strategy Enables Successful Re-Entry (Washington State)

Quick Take. An excellent example of a **cross-agency, state and local partnership utilizing blended funding streams**, My Journey Out Beyond (My JOB) is an innovative work readiness training, work-based learning, and mentoring model that builds on traditional educational programming in several Washington State juvenile placement facilities. Nearly 1,500 students have been served in the program since inception. Overseen by the Pacific Mountain Workforce Development Council (PacMtn WDC), which administers the WIOA program, in Western Washington State in partnership with the state Offices of Vocational Rehabilitation and Department of Children Youth and Families-Juvenile Rehabilitation, and local school districts.

The model is supported primarily by state juvenile rehabilitation dollars and funding under WIOA Title IV. Title IV authorizes pre-employment transition services (pre-ETS) that may be used to serve young people who are eligible or may become eligible for vocational rehabilitation services for people with disabilities. My JOB also utilizes WIOA Youth dollars to offset staff costs and support stipends paid to young people enrolled in the program and for training and services when young people transition back to their communities.

Background. My JOB was originally conceived, to help young people take responsibility for their misdeeds but also to give them the tools to prepare for productive futures once they return to society. In 2016, Gov. Jay Inslee signed Executive Order 16–05, "Building Safe and Strong Communities Through Successful Re-entry" to improve how agencies work together to help people successfully return to their community after leaving prison. This Order deepened all agency commitment to offer young people in State care the services that would help them be ready for the job market when they released back into their communities.

Overview of My JOB. My JOB is delivered by PacMtn team of approximately 8-10 counselors, teachers, and specialists, and features a 40-hour curriculum offered through two-three 45-minute classes one day per week for which students can earn elective credit. The curriculum provides student-centered instruction focusing on work-readiness and career exposure, and

features internships, access to pre-apprenticeships, job shadowing, and on-the-job training. Additional support is provided through one-on-one sessions to help with resume-writing and planning for the future, and by periodic 2-hour "booster packs" in which groups of students focus on specific job application issues including practice interviews, job-seeking skills, and considering how they will interact with potential employers and explain the circumstances of their system involvement.

The program also features guest speakers addressing career preparation and how to get ready for the real-world challenges the students will face upon release. Regardless of the session type, the mindset for all My JOB activities is centered on "what is your plan for transition?" Participants are guided by a re-entry planning team including a counselor, a family member, and staff from the placement facility.

My JOB supports mission-driven outcomes for each partner organization, including:
- Protecting public safety while also promoting self-advocacy and independence for youth;
- Providing early exposure to employment for young people;
- Linking students to career pathways;
- Connecting students to their communities; and
- Applying best practices and data driven programming.

Other Related Strategies. In addition to the My JOB curriculum, PacMtn offers several short-term occupational training programs for youth in placement, including forklift, manufacturing-related, construction trades, and gardening/food cultivation. As a result, students can return to their communities with multiple industry-recognized certificates and credentials. PacMtn is also helping correctional stsaff to develop a workforce development mentality, such as by considering how to reimagine chores and other required duties as opportunities for work experience and work-readiness training. PacMtn has found work-based learning to be particularly useful with youth who may lack experience or discipline necessary for success in the world of work. The development of the skills to find and keep a job are practiced and refined in work-based learning. Some of the jobs offered through MyJOB can pay stipends or hourly rates higher than those provided by the institution.

Transition Services. PacMtn increasingly emphasizes continuity of care strategies for successful transition and community re-integration. Youth leave placement with several documents designed to promote their transition, including a re-integration plan, a resume/portfolio describing strengths and challenges, employment and training options available, and a statement from their primary counselor identifying the services they have received and an assessment of their status. Staff advocate for the youth and build connections for youth returning to their communities. These resources could include warm hand-offs to local WIOA youth program coordinators that can work with them on job and education placements, American Job Centers where additional employment and training opportunities are found and employment placement counselors who are looking for individuals who have demonstrated fortitude and self-initiative.

IV. What Changes to WIOA Would Help Youth with Justice Involvement?

WIOA offers access to many of the evidence-based services that youth with justice involvement need to enter and retain employment. However, each state and each local workforce development board has discretion in how they implement programming. There are several common recommendations for how the workforce-development system can better serve the hardest-to-serve young people. *Each of these recommendations can be taken on by practitioners or leaders at the local or state levels.*

Allow for self-attestation. States and local areas may allow young people to "self-attest," or certify that they meet certain eligibility criteria for WIOA services – rather than requiring documentation. These could include an individual certifying that they are a person with a disability, that they are not in school, or that they are pregnant or parenting. In June 2020 USDOL issued landmark guidance laying out exactly which data elements may be collected with self-attestation.[25]

Renegotiate performance targets. Under WIOA, state workforce development boards negotiate targets based on WIOA's performance measures with USDOL. States, in turn, negotiate targets with local workforce development boards. USDOL acknowledges that serving harder-to-serve young people, such as youth with justice involvement, may mean fewer young people are served or other performance measures decline (see Appendix B for more information on USDOL's position). State and local workforce boards may renegotiate their targets at any time, to accommodate serving youth with justice involvement. Similarly, the number of program participants, and their outcomes, do not need to increase each time new state and local plans are made under WIOA; *serving the young people who most need services should dictate appropriate performance targets*.

Leverage workforce board discretion. State and local workforce development boards have an extensive list of statutorily mandated members, including representatives of private industry, representatives of different WIOA-funded programs, and representatives of workers. Still, workforce leaders have much discretion in who fills these roles. They should strategically pursue mandated members who want to assist youth with justice involvement.

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[25] Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 23-19, U.S Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration, https://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/attach/TEGL/TEGL_23-19.pdf

With interested private sector leaders on a board, for instance, a local workforce development board may be able to reduce barriers at the local level, such as urging local employers to narrowly tailor background checks or remove irrelevant educational requirements from job descriptions.

Seek WIOA waivers. The Secretary of Labor has broad discretion to waive WIOA requirements.[26] Local areas may petition states, and states may petition USDOL, for waivers that make it easier to serve system-involved young people. (DOL regularly updates a list of waivers that have been granted.) [27] Waivers that may assist system-involved young people include:

- Counting all youth with involvement in the justice or child-welfare system, whether enrolled in school or not, as out-of-school youth for the purposes of WIOA, to create more incentives for their enrollment by service providers.[28]
- Providing youth services in a local area that are focused on effective strategies for system-involved young people (such as transitional jobs), rather than the 14 services required under WIOA.
- Increasing wage reimbursements for employers providing on-the-job training opportunities to youth with system experience, to create enthusiasm among employers for involving system-involved youth in these opportunities.
- Modifying performance measures for state or local workforce development boards to encourage serving system-involved youth, such as by lengthening the windows for achieving different positive outcomes.
- Blending dollars among different WIOA programs, with appropriate guardrails, to serve system-involved young people more easily, such as funding for WIOA Youth, WIOA Adult, and Adult Education programs.

EXAMPLE FROM THE FIELD: Flexible Nationwide Effort Reengages Youth with Justice Involvement at Scale

FHI 360 leads the Compass Rose Collaborative (CRC),[29] a project funded by the U.S. Department of Labor to improve the education and employment outcomes of young adults, ages 18 through 24, after involvement in the U.S. criminal justice system.

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[26] WIOA waiver from U.S Department of Labor Employment and Training, https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/wioa/waivers
[27] Approved WIOA Waivers by Waiver Type, U.S Department of Labor Employment and Training, https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ETA/wioa/pdfs/Waivers_Granted_as_of_July_24_2020.pdf
[28] Los Angeles received a waiver under the Performance Partnership Pilots authority along these lines, which allowed providers to consider foster, homeless, and runaway youth who are attending school to be counted as out-of-school youth for fiscal accounting purposes. See https://youth.gov/sites/default/files/P3-Waiver-List-FINAL_2018-12-10.pdf.
[29] The Compass Rose Collaborative is entirely funded by the Department of Labor in the amount of $4.5 million. No other sources of funding support the program.

The CRC works with partners in communities with high rates of poverty and crime, including:
- City of Albany Department of Youth and Workforce Services
- City of Los Angeles Economic and Workforce Development Department
- The RightWay Foundation (Los Angeles, Calif.)
- CommunityWorks, Inc. (Colorado Springs and Denver, Colo.)
- Greater Louisville Workforce Development Board, Inc.
- Mayor's Office of Employment Development (Baltimore, Md.)
- National Center on Institutions and Alternatives (Baltimore, Md.)
- Office of Workforce Development's Youth Options Unlimited Division (Boston, Mass.)
- Our Piece of the Pie, Inc. (Hartford, Conn.)
- Phoenix Youth and Family Services, Inc. (Southeast Ark.)
- St. Louis Agency on Training and Employment

The collaborative supports young participants in partner organizations by:
- Implementing a program model that focuses on providing youth with: 1) support services, including assistance obtaining housing, clothing, food, transportation and counseling; 2) legal services; 3) work readiness, preparation and job placement; and 4) educational services
- Creating lasting community-based partnerships that empower young adults beyond their participation in the program
- Documenting and replicating effective practices in communities through FHI 360's peer-learning communities and the development of tools, resources and webinars

In addition, the collaborative partners with the Young Adult Leadership Council, made up of program participants, who provide a youth voice and feedback to the program. Also, the CRC is developing registered apprenticeship curricula for Youth Development Practitioners that will launch across the United States to train young people for youth-serving roles and that will transition participants to careers such as case managers, mentors and childcare workers.

V. What Works to Build Partnerships and Connect Systems?

For decades, policymakers have touted cross-agency partnerships as effective vehicles for improving the coordination and delivery of all kinds of public programs, such as juvenile justice and education; education and workforce development; and workforce and child welfare. By collaborating, agencies can plan and deliver services comprehensively, realize efficiencies, target scarce resources, and improve services for people who need them. Yet, despite their potential to benefit young people, many agencies find it difficult to create effective partnerships. **Why is partnership formation so challenging?**

The simple answer, and probably the most accurate, is that the complexity of human-services systems often makes cross-agency collaboration difficult. These systems, including workforce development and juvenile justice, are authorized and funded by a variety of federal, state, and sometimes local statutes. Though related, recommended programmatic interventions are likely to vary across systems, and differing performance measures—as well as what constitutes success more generally—often necessitate the creation of discrete data-management systems to track and report on results for each. These population-specific programs were created to ensure people receive the services they need and deserve, but often the specificity of these solutions, including their separate eligibility, programmatic, and outcome criteria, challenge coordination and collaboration.

As we have seen, much is known about how to improve outcomes for youth with justice involvement. The issue then becomes, how can we build bridges between the juvenile justice and workforce systems so that they can jointly plan, develop, and fund these activities for youth with justice involvement and young adults?

An effective answer to this question is to urge elected officials take charge in convening system leaders, encouraging buy-in across systems and focusing on community-wide impacts as opposed to system specific performance measures. The National League of Cities outlines several steps officials can take such as:

- Ensuring comprehensive service plans, services and supports with relevant agencies;
- Effectively operationalizing services and supports for reentering and deep-end youth;
- Metrics for measuring success such as academic engagement and progress, residential stability, social integration with family and friends.[30]

Youth do not live their lives in separate systems, so to meet their needs, different institutions must build upon and cooperate with one another. The success of partnership is then strengthen based upon a mutual goal of improving the lives of youth.

a. Characteristics of Effective Partnerships

Linda Harris, former Director of Youth Policy at the Center for Law and Social Policy, had at least part of the answer for effective partnerships when she wrote: "It is clear that the first

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[30] See National League of Cities, "Toward an Expanded City Role Supporting Youth in the Deep End of the Juvenile Justice System," https://www.nlc.org/resource/toward-an-expanded-city-role-supporting-youth-in-the-deep-end-of-the-juvenile-justice-system/yef-jj-expanded-city-role-white-paper/

task is convincing members of both systems that the benefits for youth and the community more than justify the challenges of integrating the systems' cultures and missions."[31] This statement underscores a fundamental truth of partnership and collaboration: **the success of partnerships is based upon a mutual goal of improving the lives of youth and that collaboration will strengthen and make such a goal achievable.** Youth do not live their lives in separate systems so in order to meet their needs, different institutions must build upon and cooperate with one another."

Harris polled several successful local workforce-juvenile justice collaboratives and identified several common characteristics:

- Bridging these two systems was part of a larger vision for youth and the community.
- Success was not immediate, but evolved over time with much nurturing and support.
- Substantial investment was required in understanding each other's systems.
- It was important to demonstrate success in terms of the numbers of youth who were positively engaged and making progress, and in reduced recidivism.

> *Communication is key. You have to make sure everyone has a clear understanding of their roles, duties, expectations, and that they're prepared to pivot based on data and trends.*
>
> Mauricio Torre

Brown, Maxwell, DeJesus, and Schiraldi also offered lessons learned based on research for workforce development-juvenile justice collaboration, including:

- Developing a common vision for the collaboration, and agreeing on shared language.
- Intentionally tackling and resolving issues and barriers that impact both systems, such as geographic mismatch, transportation, confidentiality.
- Identifying innovative, blended funding to support activities of mutual interest.
- Avoiding or confronting territorialism.
- Expecting the unexpected.[32]

Furthermore, while all partnerships are specific to their context and on-the-ground realities, research, and practice over the last decade[33] have identified several characteristics of effective partnerships. These can be summarized as follows:

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[31] Center for Law and Social Policy, "Making the Juvenile Justice – Workforce System Connection for Re-Entering Young Offenders," https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED494129.pdf

[32] The Annie E. Casey Foundation, "Barriers and Promising Approaches to Workforce and Youth Development for Young Offenders," https://www.aecf.org/resources/barriers-and-promising-approaches-to-workforce-and-youth-development-for-yo/

[33] Drawn from research including:
- The Partnering Initiative. *12 steps towards successful cross-sector partnership.*
- Rosenblum, Elyse. *6 Steps to Ensure Successful Cross-Sector Partnerships*, Grads of Life, 2016.
- Allen, Lili. *Mobilizing a Cross-Sector Collaborative for Systemic Change*, JFF, 2010.
- *Scaling Up School and Community Partnerships*, Melaville, Jacobson, and Blank. 2011.

- **Identify individuals** within potential partner organizations key to accomplishing potential shared tasks, and who are willing and able to work collaboratively.

- Work with these individuals to **define the goals of the partnership**, specify measures of success, and build a common commitment to achieving them.

- Identify and **cultivate key players** in the partnership, who may include:
    - Leaders in each agency who can serve as champions;
    - Staff who have expertise in, or an affinity for, making connections across programs and agencies;
    - Staff throughout each agency whose work will be affected by the partnership;
    - Staff who have access to and authority to use or allocate agency resources;
    - As appropriate, staff who have access to the data the partnership needs to plan and track results; and
    - Potential "challengers" to the partnership, who need to be brought onboard.

- In cases where staff or agencies do not have a history of working together, take the time to **build knowledge and trust**, learning each other's contexts, priorities, and languages.

- Agree on **written ground rules** for the partnership, such as strategies for ensuring communication among partners and confidentiality protocols for reviewing data.

- Share available **cross-system data** on target populations, with an eye toward identifying the needs of and potential benefits for individuals served by partner agencies.

- Based on the partnership's goals and findings from shared data analyses, develop **specific work plans with measurable outcomes and timelines** which advance the work of both the partnership and its individual members.

- In pursuing **shared goals and strategies**, expect to recalibrate work plans and tactics based on experience, changing staff and leaders, and evolving contexts.

- Put in writing, through **Memoranda of Understanding** (MOU) or Agreement (MOA) the roles and responsibilities of each partner to secure a stable and continuous partnership, regardless if administration in any agency should change.

- **Measure and evaluate results** (including how well the partners interact), acknowledging both successes and areas where additional work is needed.

- **Celebrate successes**, distribute credit for achievements to reward and reinforce participation, and plan for scaling up and forming new collaborations.

- Corcoran, Mimi, et al. *Collective Impact for Opportunity Youth*, FSG, 2012.

To facilitate coordination, some effective partnerships rely on the leadership of a **neutral intermediary or convening organization**. Regardless, partners do not need to agree on everything—only on specific goals and the strategies to accomplish them.

In addition to understanding key elements of successful partnership formation, it is important to assess the progress of collaboration over time. The "Levels of Collaboration Scale" was created by Dr. Bruce Frey from several existing models to measure the effectiveness of collaboration among partners and has applicability to a wide range of partnerships. A simplified version of the tool can be found in Appendix A.

b. Steps to Promote Collaboration and Trust Across Systems

A functioning, sustainable partnership is a powerful strategy to achieve common goals, but even if a full-fledged collaboration is not yet in place several specific steps can go a long way toward improving outcomes for youth with justice involvement – and creating an environment in which broader partnership will eventually be possible. The following examples are drawn from interviews with local practitioners, as well as from documents cited earlier, in particular *Making the Juvenile Justice – Workforce Development Connection for Re-entering Young Offenders: a Guide for Local Practice*, and *From Striving to Thriving: Supporting Transformation, Reentry, and Connections to Employment for Young Adults*.[34] [35]

Organizations always have turnover and changes in strategic direction, so maintaining partnerships requires continual reassessment and relationship-building.

Caitlin Dawkins, FHI 360, Washington, D.C.

Steps that Juvenile-Justice Officials Can Take to Advance Partnership

- **Get to know your local workforce development board.** Every region of the country is served by a workforce development board appointed by local elected officials. Most members must represent private-sector employers, and must also include organized labor, community-based organizations, and knowledgeable appointees from other

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[34] Center for Law and Social Policy, "Making the Juvenile Justice- Workforce System Connection for Re-Entering Young Offenders," https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED494129.pdf
[35] Center for Law and Social Policy & FHI 360, "From Striving to Thriving: Supporting Transformation, Reentry, and Connections to Employment for Young Adults," https://www.fhi360.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/resource-crc-surviving-thriving.pdf

sectors. These local boards oversee and approve all WIOA funding.[36] Each workforce board member can be a powerful advocate if they understand how juvenile justice can support the priorities of the statute.

- **Find out if your local board has a youth committee.** Many local boards have appointed youth committees, either made up of representatives of local youth-serving organizations or current or former program participants, to advise on program models, spending priorities, and other related topics. Attending youth committee meetings, speaking about the potential value of partnership with the juvenile justice system, and seeking membership (for juvenile-justice officials or youth with justice involvement) are all potentially important steps in building collaboration.

- **Get to know the staff of the workforce board.** Boards have administrative staff who manage the day-to-day administration of WIOA funding, including drafting and evaluating requests for proposals, recommending successful applicants for funds, and monitoring performance. Connecting to board staff can be an important way to understand local policy and funding priorities, and to build trust and pave the way to partnership.

- **Seek assistance in connecting with local businesses.** Because of its business focus, the local board and staff can provide access to employers who might be willing to offer employment opportunities for system-involved youth, and to advise on training curricula for young people in delinquent placement.

- **Identify and learn about successful applicants for youth funds.** Although boards are not required to competitively procure WIOA youth funds, most do. Recipients are typically youth-focused nonprofit organizations with solid track records of program design and management. These organizations can explain the specifics of WIOA requirements and provide specific information on how the program elements can be coordinated and delivered, including for youth with justice involvement. In addition, they may provide services that could benefit youth in the justice system. *Organizations that administer diversion programs or other court-funded programs for youth with justice involvement in your area may even be eligible to run WIOA-funded programs themselves.*

- **Use the authority of judges to convene partners.** Judges have the power to bring together key officials across systems—including education and workforce development—around improving outcomes for youth with justice involvement. Often, community leaders will

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[36] See Workforce Development Board Finder, https://www.careeronestop.org/LocalHelp/WorkforceDevelopment/find-workforce-development-boards.aspx

accept the call of a judge to participate. *Judges can play not only the role of one-time convener, but leverage their power and long tenures to become a long-term advocate for cross-system collaboration.*

Steps that Workforce-Development Officials Can Take to Advance Partnership

- **Understand your role as a part of a continuum of options for youth.** Workforce development is an option along a spectrum that includes diversion, placement, and aftercare/parole. Workforce development can be utilized as an alternative to placement for youth diverted or placed on probation. If youth have these options are the earlier stages of involvement with the justice system, it prevents them from having interaction at the "deep end."

- **Engage the local juvenile court.** Invite judges, officers, and other staff to a briefing on local workforce programming, demonstrating how it can help reduce system involvement and support successful re-integration, and asking how the workforce system can support their efforts. Understanding workforce offerings and their value will better equip the court to make appropriate decisions on charging, restitution, and sentencing.

Our approach to workforce preparation and job readiness for justice-involved youth isn't all that different from other opportunity youth, but there is a big difference in how they are perceived by employers. So, we do a lot of development and training for the employers on tolerance, understanding, and mitigating the barriers these kids face.

Hector Rivera

- **Establish relationships with each element of the juvenile justice system.** Learning about the priorities of your local police department, and probation and parole/aftercare offices, may surface areas for initial collaboration and "quick wins." As appropriate, consider stationing staff in probation and parole/aftercare offices, juvenile courts, and police departments, so that direct referrals can be made efficiently and effectively.

- **Recommend that representatives from the justice system be appointed to the local workforce board and youth committee**, which can help to bring new perspectives and help justice officials appreciate how workforce services can reduce recidivism and promote successful outcomes for system-involved youth.

- Encourage juvenile justice judges and officers to **consider participation in workforce development, education, and/or service activities as part of the restitution and sentencing processes.**

- **Help employer partners see youth with justice involvement as assets.** These young adults are potential customers, employees, and even business partners. Involving youth with

justice involvement in existing meetings conducted by workforce staff that highlights their capabilities and talents may be a first step to reframing employer attitudes.

- **Become advocates for youth with justice involvement during system involvement and in court**, as well as a trusted voice speaking to the potential of workforce training to promote positive outcomes.

Steps that Officials from Both Systems Can Take Together to Advance Partnership

- **Coordinate WIOA enrollment to maximize eligibility.** WIOA eligibility is determined at time of enrollment. Therefore, workforce and juvenile justice systems can work together to determine the best times to enroll youth with justice involvement. For example, if a young person is out-of-school prior to institutional placement, they are eligible for WIOA out-of-school youth funding regardless of subsequent school status. For youth who are already in placement, systems can determine the best timing, such as whether to enroll the young person immediately or wait until their release. Both systems can also streamline the process by working together to collect eligibility documentation.

- **Establish formal referral and protocol agreements or memoranda of understanding between systems.** Rather than the police, probation, correctional agencies, or courts making individual decisions about services for youth referred to diversion or alternatives to sentencing, the systems can determine in advance how the process will unfold. For example, young

On the Nuts & Bolts of Partnership

We're in the state's placement facilities as welcomed guests. We have to be aligned with what they want to do.

Cheryl Fambles

Consider creating a community-planning and review team with all the relevant partners at the table using video conferencing. Community partners can work alongside of the young people and their support system to formulate a plan so that everyone knows the expectations and are accountable.

Caitlin Dawkins

We have weekly conversations with the police and court officials, from the assistant chief to individual probation officers. Also, our staff are stationed at the police department to enroll youth who are referred to diversion programs. The police officer just walks the paperwork over to our desk and we take it from there.

Mauricio Torre

people could be referred to a local youth center for assessment and appropriate education and training, or to other needed services that can promote success.

- **Develop joint professional development opportunities.** Trainings for staff in both systems provide opportunities to develop relationships and common points of view on key issues such as race, equity, and inclusion; adolescent brain science and resilience; de-escalation and conflict resolution techniques; and others. [37]

- **Offer on-site programming.** Consistent with requirements and protocols, systems can work together to offer workforce training programs—such as job readiness training, career counseling, life skills, GED, occupational preparation, work-based learning, even work experiences—within placement facilities. Local board staff can help to ensure that occupational training is aligned with the jobs available in the region to young people with criminal backgrounds, to ensure they have a realistic shot at earning state certification or licensure.

- **Start re-entry planning early.** Youth can be assessed for academic and occupational needs and screened for eligibility for various programs and services well before their release date. Similarly, retrieval of records, case files, and procurement of needed documents (i.e. official identification card) can be completed prior to release.

- **Provide pre-release services and relationship building.** In addition to accessing follow-up services and compiling required documents, systems can work together to build connections to the adults who will help young people navigate the return home while still in placement, including establishing relationships with training providers, mentors, parole officers, legal advocates, and human service staff, such as via video-conferencing technology.

- **Share space.** To facilitate access by young people and efficiency of service, workforce systems can provide space for officials from juvenile justice in career centers or workforce programs; juvenile facilities or programs can house workforce staff or services.

- **Share data to help identify priority target populations.** Examining data from both systems can provide a better understanding of barriers and opportunities for youth with justice involvement, as well as patterns that can help identify strategies or approaches most likely to have impact.

- **Convene community conversations to identify strategies to promote better outcomes.** Creating opportunities for community members to share views and comment on what the systems should be doing can inform improvements and build will to support change efforts.

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[37] The Annie E. Casey Foundation, "The 2020 Reimagining Juvenile Justice Train-the-Trainer Institute," https://www.aecf.org/blog/apply-now-the-2020-reimagining-juvenile-justice-train-the-trainer-institute/

EXAMPLE FROM THE FIELD: Collaboration Led by Elected Officials Reduces System Involvement (Chatham County, Georgia)

Quick Take. Chatham County, Georgia, which includes the City of Savannah, utilized a **juvenile court-led process to reduce justice involvement for young people** which included gathering and **analyzing data, convening community partners, and developing action plans** focused on building work readiness and providing social supports.

State Context. An essential precursor to WREP's creation was former Governor Nathan Deal's decision to focus on juvenile justice reform and cross-system data sharing among state agencies. The Governor's priority on juvenile justice empowered juvenile court judges to convene system leaders to look at their data, identify problem areas, and find ways to reduce system involvement for young people.

Chatham County Pursues Changes. Partners in Chatham County, which includes Savannah, shared and reviewed their data to determine "hot-spots": ZIP codes where there were significant instances of system involvement, and the prime ages of young people who were being confined. Involved in these conversations were staff from local courts, the police, school officials, religious leaders, and community stakeholders, who all reviewed data and developed focused plans to address areas of identified need. They were supported in this effort by Veronica Vargas, a consultant for the Annie E. Casey Foundation (AECF).

Based on these analyses partners including the juvenile courts, the police department, and the county school system identified 14- and 15-year old African American youth who were repeat offenders as a focus for their efforts. They further concluded that many of these young people were often detained for simple parole violations or disciplinary referrals from the school or police.

To change these patterns, judges convened a county-wide stakeholder committee to develop recommendations, The committee included Chatham County Juvenile Court Administrators; the superintendent of Savannah-Chatham County Public Schools; the chief of police; pastors and other religious leaders; county and city elected officials; and Black leaders in the community, including a former mayor. The committee convened a Community Safety Forum in summer 2016, a full-day meeting for community members. One of the most frequent recommendations that emerged was to improve workforce readiness.

The Work Readiness Enrichment Program Is Launched. In response, the courts worked with AECF to develop a Work Readiness Enrichment Program (WREP.)

The Work Readiness Enrichment Program (WREP) is an 18-week juvenile court referred program for high-risk youth ages 14 – 16 designed to serve disconnected and system-involved youth with the intention of providing educational programming so as to bring them back to their grade level, provide work readiness training so they are qualified to enter the

work force, and support services to help address the root cause of their chronic delinquent behavior and activity. WREP is a community intervention program aspiring to reduce youth from being committed to the Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ.)

WREP targets students enrolled in Chatham County Public School's Intensive Behavior Unit program (a less than full day program) because that is the population where the highest delinquency and recidivism rates seen in Chatham County Juvenile Court. The program approach is specifically designed to establish relationships with youth chronically engaged in delinquent behavior and provide them with 25 hours of educational and support services per week. All youth will be interviewed by Goodwill Southeast Georgia to ensure they are interested in the program and to determine there are no gang/crew/neighborhood imbalances that could potentially pose a risk to participation.

Consistent with the data analysis, the Work Readiness Enrichment Program focused on Black youth age 14-16 who were chronic offenders and "one foot away" from delinquent placement. Most had been suspended from school or were in some form of mandated independent study. Based on its capacity and experience, Goodwill of Coastal Georgia, a WIOA youth services provider, was selected to co-host the Work Readiness Enrichment program and to provide services.

The Chatham County Juvenile Court Probation Officers identified youth for an eight-person pilot program, which was intentionally small to ensure that the program was presented with fidelity and with all needed supports. Goodwill worked with participants' parents to ensure that the young people were ready for the program, especially focusing on their desire for change. On the very few occasions young people were turned away, it was due to a clear lack of interest by youth or parent.

The program, which was funded primarily by the Chatham County Juvenile Court with in-kind support from Goodwill, Savannah-Chatham County Public Schools, and community based organizations was launched in fall 2017. However, it quickly became clear that participants needed much more than work readiness training: safe places to live and study, food, and support for other chronic life disturbances. This wasn't surprising for youth practitioners, but some system leaders hadn't fully appreciated what the young men faced. Due to these and other related challenges, some youth who began the program subsequently re-offended, were detained, and dropped from the program. In those cases, other youth were added to maintain enrollment levels.

Outcomes from WREP. These challenges notwithstanding, over the more than two years the program has produced many positive outcomes:

- 95 percent gained at least one grade level and some as many as three;
- Many returned to their original school;
- Young men and their families received essential services, such as housing, food, and health care;

- Youth were placed by choice when? need in transitional homes;
- Youth were empowered in the ways they viewed themselves and the world; and
- For those who were old enough and ready, many were placed in jobs.

In the early stages of the pilot, jobs and work experiences were offered in Goodwill's stores and through its social enterprise businesses. As larger employers in Chatham County – the Port of Savannah, Coca-Cola, Gulf Stream, and local restaurants—learned about the program, they began to hire young people in internships and unsubsidized jobs. (Chatham County's summer jobs program introduced these employers to the benefits of hiring young people like the WREP participants.)

The Work Readiness Enrichment Program was a collective effort:

- Savannah-Chatham County Public Schools offered an instructor to help students get back to grade level, as well as special education teacher who assessed students and administered their Individualized Educational Programs.
- Goodwill provided a program coordinator, who managed the program, facilitated communication with schools, and served as an intermediary for the program, and a Navigator. Adapted from Homeboy Industries, Navigators are "credible messengers" with lived experience.
- Chatham County Juvenile Court provided space and a designated probation officer, who was assigned to all young people in the program to provide for coordination and a continuum of care. The court also provides a school advocate to collect grades, attendance, and to make sure that academic information, IEPs and other school-related information are available to the court.

Lessons from WREP. Lessons and opportunities for the future from WREP include:

- Build working relationships with the court system, so as Vargas puts it, "you're in that trusted circle."
- Work with Chambers of Commerce to provide opportunities for youth employment.
- Tell stories and humanize the experiences of young people with justice involvement. Employers will be more likely to give them a chance if they understand what they have overcome or carrying
- Judges are powerful; use them to convene parties and broker solutions.
- Stakeholders need education, too. Employers, workforce systems, and other stakeholders often don't understand the challenges and backgrounds of these young people and will need guidance in working with and supporting them.

Conclusion

The primary purposes of this toolkit have been to encourage collaboration between juvenile justice and workforce development systems and to demonstrate how these relationships can achieve better outcomes for young people, result in more efficient use of public dollars, and make the efforts of officials in both systems more effective. These are powerful

motivators, and hopefully can help to overcome the many issues and challenges that work against better coordination and integration of efforts.

But there is another critical factor referenced throughout this paper: **WIOA intentionally and explicitly calls for the workforce-development system to serve the most challenged and disconnected young people.** This is the requirement of the statute and the U.S. Department of Labor has been steadfast in its reading of WIOA's commitment to these young people. In response to questions at a statewide conference of workforce leaders, Sara Hastings of the USDOL Division of Youth Services shared the department's stance on serving this population. Following are excerpts from her statement, which can be viewed in its entirety at [Appendix B](#):

> DOL stresses that OSY are the priority youth to be served under WIOA and acknowledges they may require a particular set of services and approaches to help youth achieve outcomes…It is important that your programs serve the hardest to serve youth to improve expectations and factor into the [statistical adjustment] model to account for your efforts. Capturing an accurate picture of your local demographics will allow DOL to use that data to set future targets. Again, the priority population for WIOA Youth Programs is OSY. We encourage programs to adapt their models to best serve these youth, and the legislation makes it easier to prioritize these youth. Programs should develop comprehensive systems of service and put service delivery mechanisms in place to serve those most in need of services.

As the COVID-19 pandemic inflicts lasting damage on young adults' prospects in the job market, there has never been a more important time to seek the kinds of cross-system collaboration described by this toolkit. Although unemployment rates for young people have fallen from their highs in April 2020, the Bureau of Labor Statistics has reported that 18.5 percent of 16-24-year-olds were unemployed in July 2020, twice the level of a year earlier, with even higher rates for Black (25.4 percent) Asian (25.4 percent) and Latinx (21.7 percent) young people. Further, the percentage of young people in the labor force declined by about 4.5% from the previous year.[38] These data are particularly troubling given the Federal Reserve's projections that challenging economic and employment conditions are likely to persist for years.

Therefore, if there ever were a time to put aside our systems' cultures and insular traditions, that time is now. Hopefully, the ideas, tools, and stories shared here point the way.

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[38] U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics. (2020, August 18.) News Release: Employment and Unemployment Among Youth – Summer 2020, *https://www.bls.gov/news.release/youth.nr0.htm*.

Appendix A: Levels of Collaboration Scale

Before starting, please review the descriptions for levels of collaboration. For each row that does not include you, circle the number that most reflects your experience in working with the partner.

Using the scale provided, please indicate the extent to which you <u>currently</u> interact with each other partner	LEVEL OF COLLABORATION					
	0 No Interaction	**1** Networking	**2** Cooperation	**3** Coordination	**4** Coalition	**5** Collaboration
Partner Name		● Aware of organization ● Loosely defined roles ● Little communication ● All decisions made independently	● Provide information to each other ● Somewhat defined roles ● Formal communication ● All decisions made independently	● Share information and resources ● Defined roles ● Frequent communication ● Some shared decision making	● Share ideas ● Share resources ● Frequent and prioritized collaboration ● All members have a vote in decision making	● Members belong to one system ● Frequent communication is characterized by mutual trust ● Consensus is reached on all decisions
	0	1	2	3	4	5
	0	1	2	3	4	5
	0	1	2	3	4	5
	0	1	2	3	4	5
	0	1	2	3	4	5
	0	1	2	3	4	5
	0	1	2	3	4	5
	0	1	2	3	4	5
	0	1	2	3	4	5
	0	1	2	3	4	5

Adapted from: Frey, B. B., Lohmeier, J. H., Lee, S. W., & Tollefson, N. (2006). Measuring collaboration among grant partners. *American Journal of Evaluation, 27*(3), 383-392.

Appendix B: Excerpt from Presentation by Sara Hastings, U.S. Department of Labor

The Department of Labor has made several efforts over the past few years to strengthen the field's capacity to serve the hardest to serve youth in the WIOA Youth Program, including those who are out-of-school (OSY) youth, experiencing homelessness, in foster care, or are justice involved.

The WIOA Youth Program contains several elements to facilitate serving out-of-school (OSY) youth. The WIOA legislation requires that at least 75 percent of all WIOA youth funds be spent on OSY, which is an increase from the minimum of 30 percent under WIA. Prior to this change, there were almost no other formula-funded education and training resources targeted towards OSY. Similar to WIA, however, eligibility criteria for OSY includes those who have been subject to the criminal justice process, youth experiencing homelessness or in foster care.

Given the transition from WIA's 30 percent expenditure requirement to WIOA's 75 percent expenditure requirement, we understand that many programs have had to adapt their program models and strategies in order to serve more OSY. DOL stresses that OSY are the priority youth to be served under WIOA and acknowledges they may require a particular set of services and approaches to help youth achieve outcomes.

Additionally, as outlined in DOL's second WIOA Youth program guidance, TEGL 8-15, the Department expects the cost per participant under WIOA to increase as more OSY require more intensive and costly services.[39] A byproduct of this cost increase may be that fewer youth are served and that the youth served may be in the program longer. Many local areas rely on shorter-term contracts which may incentivize to identify youth who will fit within the restricted program length as opposed to youth who most need services. Please note there are no federal requirements or limits on how long you can serve youth. Programs may have to revisit contracting strategies to ensure that contracts are sufficient length to serve the hardest to serve youth for desired outcomes.

Finally, for performance measures the law requires that DOL negotiate levels of performance with the State. The statistical adjustment model is one of four factors considered with negotiating performance.[40] The model considers both actual economic conditions like unemployment rate, job losses or gains in industries, and characteristics of participants at time of enrollment including:
- Poor work history;

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[39] Training and Employment Guidance Letter No. 08-15, U.S Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration, https://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/attach/TEGL/TEGL_08-15.pdf
[40] U.S Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration, "Statistical Adjustment Model Methodology," https://wdr.doleta.gov/directives/attach/TEGL/TEGL_26-15-Attachment-II_Acc.pdf

- Lack of work experience;
- Educational skills attainment;
- Low levels of literacy;
- Disability status;
- Homelessness;
- Welfare dependency;
- Age, gender and/or race; and
- Offender status.

The statistical adjustment model takes these factors into consideration as part of the negotiations process. At the end of the program year the data from the initial model will be updated with the most current data to reflect actual conditions in the States. The model will then yield new targets based on the updated information. More on this process can be found on the performance website at:
https://www.dol.gov/agencies/eta/performance/goals/negotiated-performance-levels.

It is important that your programs serve the hardest to serve youth to improve expectations and factor into the model to account for your efforts. Capturing an accurate picture of your local demographics will allow DOL to use that data to set future targets.

Again, the priority population for WIOA Youth Programs is OSY. We encourage programs to adapt their models to best serve these youth, and the legislation makes it easier to prioritize these youth. Programs should develop comprehensive systems of service and put service delivery mechanisms in place to serve those most in need of services. This can best be accomplished through partnerships, strong youth committees, and implementing strategies to ensure youth don't fall through the cracks. Bringing together outside partners such as mayors and community leaders as champions to ensure dedicated resources are made is also crucial.

If we can all do that, we can get there.

NATIONAL YOUTH EMPLOYMENT COALITION