Ch.10 Effective Programs and Services

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Beyond ensuring public safety, the intent of the juvenile justice system has historically been to rehabilitate youth engaged in delinquent behavior. It can be argued that for many youth the issue is one of habilitation rather than rehabilitation. Many justice-involved youth never had the nurturing and direction needed by all children and youth, and so the purpose with these youth is to provide them with access to positive, pro-social experiences and opportunities to develop new skills.

Rehabilitation or habilitation is considered to be so significant a goal that the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDPA) urges state advisory groups and state agencies to provide funding for “programs for positive youth development that assist delinquent and other at-risk youth in obtaining: (i) a sense of safety and structure; (ii) a sense of belonging and membership; (iii) a sense of self-worth and social contribution; (iv) a sense of independence and control over one’s life; (v) a sense of closeness in interpersonal relationships.”[1]

In the Coalition for Juvenile Justice report entitled, Positive Youth Justice: Framing Justice Interventions Using the Concepts of Positive Youth Development, Jeffrey Butts, Gordon Bazemore, and Aundra Meroe agree. They say that positive youth development (PYD) is an approach that recognizes the need for young people to have access to appropriate supports and opportunities through which they may develop the knowledge and skills they need to become positive and productive members of society and that “the concepts and principles of positive youth development (PYD) [articulated in the Title II of the JJDPA] offer valuable guidance for the design of interventions for youthful offenders.”[2]

In addition, programs and program activities—particularly those that successfully promote PYD—have been linked to improved conditions of confinement, reduced problems in crowded facilities, improved resident and staff safety, and increased resistance to liability.[3]
Rationale for Programming

Youth in confinement bring with them considerable anxiety and hostility. Some are withdrawn, while others are extremely aggressive. Some are so disturbed that they do not dare show their true feelings. They are upset, and confinement can make them more upset. Many carry with them feelings of hostility toward adults, authority, and society in general. Others have experienced trauma and adverse childhood experiences that contribute to many of these overt behaviors. Some have a strong identification with older delinquents and antisocial goals. Putting an anxious and angry youth in a group of other anxious and angry youth—or with adults in the case of youth being charged and prosecuted as adults—can only serve to compound problems unless proper measures are taken.

Confinement facilities that serve youth have the obligation to hold youth, curb their impulsive behaviors, and work to mend their social ills. This mending partially consists of controlling behavior so that youth do not harm themselves or others. It also involves assisting youth in changing distorted views of themselves and their situation and in developing worthwhile goals.

Programming for youth is an effective and productive approach to accomplishing the many goals of confinement. Even unexceptional and limited programs serve to reduce the number of problems youth experience in confinement. The following benefits of programming (articulated in the original Desktop Guide for Good Practice in Juvenile Detention, 1996), continue to be benefits of programming today, regardless of the type of facility in which youth are confined.

- Good programs keep confined youth so busy that they do not have time to think of ways to negatively vent hostility. Youth give less thought to harming themselves, others, the building, and equipment and more thought to the positive outcomes of the program.
- Through programs, youth are placed in many social situations that serve to alter their distorted views of themselves and their situation. Youth with issues of self-control should be identified early. The more aggressive and impulsive behavior of youth is controlled partly by the rules and expectations of the program activity, partly by the close supervision of staff, and—when they are confined in juvenile detention or correction facilities—partly by the opinion of their peers.
- A variety of situations give more opportunity for a quick evaluation of a youth’s strengths and shortcomings. Programs provide for interaction among the youth and staff. Without interaction, it would be difficult to spot the withdrawn youth. Many times, a certain activity allows the staff to penetrate a youth’s wall of
hostility toward adults. Any activity may be the start of a rehabilitative process for a withdrawn youth. Although not all facilities that confine youth (specifically juvenile detention and adult jails) may be geared to rehabilitate youth, they can be the place where the rehabilitation process begins.

- Confined against their wishes and afraid of their surroundings, their associates, and their future, many youth experience increasing tension. Good programs provide an array of activities and opportunities for the release of emotional and physical tensions.
- Delinquent youth often have little regard for their ability and worth and lack confidence in themselves. Good programs can help them discover hidden abilities, develop new skills, learn basic facts, and develop new feelings about their ability and responsibility to improve. They can come to a more positive and realistic appraisal of themselves and their capabilities.
- The success of staff working in a confinement facility is greatly dependent on their ability to effectively engage in a genuine and caring relationship with youth. It cannot be overemphasized that programs are one of the best means available for establishing such a relationship.
- A direct, overly assertive approach by a staff member causes distrustful youth to back away and set up a barrier between him or herself and the adult. When a staff member “comes in the back door” by being a teammate in a recreational activity, giving reassurance during a craft project or school work, or helping members of the group to achieve a common goal, he or she is able to share good feelings with the youth. The youth and staff member are working together and doing what is appropriate, before either one realizes it. Effective and positive staff–youth relationships are critical.
- One of the greatest benefits of high-quality programs may be that they help the staff member see confined youth for who they are rather than for what they have done.

In sum, there are both ethical and practical reasons to implement programs and activities for youth in confinement. Not only does putting a group of youth together with little or nothing to occupy their time serve as a recipe for a host of problems, it also represents a lost opportunity to achieve the overall goal of the juvenile justice system—to rehabilitate delinquent youth.

**Goals for Programming**

According to a National Institute of Mental Health publication entitled, *The Teen Brain: Still Under Construction*, research in the area of adolescent brain development tells us the human brain is not fully developed until youth are in their early twenties.
This means that adolescence is an opportune time, developmentally, to invest in strategies that are consistent with the principles of PYD. (See Ch. 4: Developing and Maintaining a Professional Workforce; Ch. 6: Adolescent Development.)

To ensure healthy development and support positive outcomes for youth, program activities must be goal oriented. For every type of activity, physical or nonphysical, a number of goals should be established that participating youth can achieve. Such goals should be inherent in almost every activity that staff and youth engage in. If they are not, the purpose of the activity is questionable. The goals are:

- Providing for a release of emotional tension.
- Creating a constructive outlet for physical energy.
- Teaching fundamentals of recreational and other activities.
- Giving the youth self-confidence in healthy pursuits.
- Teaching fair play, rule following, and teamwork.
- Providing a socially acceptable outlet for hostility.
- Giving the youth a better understanding of himself or herself.
- Developing new interests and skills to be continued after release.
- Keeping the youth busy by providing a structure for the day.
- Developing good health habits and a healthy physique.
- Breaking down resistance to adults and adult standards and expectations.
- Permitting observation of the youth’s behavior, which aids in social diagnosis.

The following serves as a more comprehensive explanation of the goals and their meaning to everyday work with youth in a confinement setting. Review each of the goals of any activity, whether recreational, instructional, or skill building, and see if the activity will answer the following questions in a positive manner.

- Are the youth involved both emotionally as well as physically? Are the youth really enjoying the activity? Are they involved to the extent that they have forgotten temporarily about their problems and anxieties?
- Are staff challenging youth physically? Are the youth exhausting their physical energies in the activity?
- Are the abilities of individual youth being evaluated? Are youth learning the fundamental skills of the game or activity? Are they being taught and coached in the correct methods of play? Are staff able to identify handicaps the youth might have while considering the individual’s lack of knowledge or skills?
- Are staff supporting youth in building self-confidence? Are the youth being encouraged to learn and improve and become more confident of their abilities?
Are the youth experiencing a feeling of accomplishment? Do staff praise the youth for their efforts as well as their achievements?

- Are the rules of each game being taught? Are the youth being shown (and do they understand) how the game can be better when the rules are followed? Do youth see the importance of working as a team and what is lost when they are playing as individuals? Do staff explain and set examples, guiding youth toward fair play? Do youth witness a cooperative relationship among staff?

- Does the activity allow for a release of aggressive feelings? Do staff avoid creating resentment toward the activity by not putting youth in positions that are embarrassing or humiliating?

- Do youth see themselves as being successful in the activity? Are staff providing proper levels of competition that increase confidence and eliminate feelings of insecurity?

- Are the youth being taught new forms of recreation? Are youth developing good attitudes toward various skills and activities? Have staff developed the skills and created interest among youth that will encourage continued participation upon release?

- Do staff keep the youth so busy that they do not have time to think of ways to vent their hostilities on staff, equipment, or each other? Is there a balance of both active and inactive recreation to keep youth either physically or mentally involved throughout the day?

- Are youth experiencing a feeling of well-being, and do they understand it to be the result of fitness and abilities acquired through the program? Do staff impose realistic standards and expectations to avoid any potential physical harm to the youth?

- Through actions and interactions with youth, do staff gain the respect of youth and will this lead to respect for other adults? Do staff follow the same rules and regulations the youth are expected to follow—win, lose, or draw? Do youth see staff members as part of their team, trying to help and cheering for them to win, rather than as uninterested adults carrying out their duties? During leisure time, class sessions, or competition, do staff convey the feeling they are interested in the youth? Can youth rely on staff to “always be fair” rather than “always be right?”

- Are staff observant of a youth’s change of attitude and interest throughout the day? Do staff notice and record the comparative levels of skill and knowledge in each activity? Are staff sensitive to changes in peer relationships? Do staff engage in varying youth-adult interaction and notice how this variety alters youth–adult relationships? Is there enough stimulation and freedom in activities for the above characteristics to reveal themselves?
Engaging in goal-oriented activity is a natural part of the work that staff do. However, staff must be alert and attentive and engage in active processing with youth of what they have learned from any programmatic activity. David A. Kolb, an American psychologist and educational theorist, wrote a book entitled, *Experiential Learning: Experience as The Source of Learning and Development*, in which he first presented a theory for experiential learning.[5] The diagram below provides a visual depiction of Kolb’s model of experiential learning, demonstrating how it might be applied to the processing of activities with youth. The diagram is followed by descriptions of each step of this processing.

**EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING MODEL**

![Experiential Learning Model Diagram](https://info.nicic.gov/dtg/print/16)

**Activity.** Staff decide upon an activity for engaging youth, decide on what goals youth are expected to meet or achieve by participating in the activity, and youth participate in the activity or exercise.

**Observation.** Staff observe how youth engage with one another during the activity. Youth will naturally observe one another. Staff allow youth to share their experience and observations. Staff share their observations.

**Process.** Upon completion of the activity, staff intentionally, either formally or informally, process with youth what happened during the activity (e.g., How did you/everyone do, get along? Did you accomplish your goal or complete the activity?
How did you or why weren't you able to accomplish your goal or complete the activity? What worked or didn't work? What was easy or difficult about what you just did, etc.? What, if anything, did members of the group do contribute to the success or lack of success in completing the activity?)

**Generalize.** Staff discuss with youth what they learned from the experience. This is an opportunity to help youth identify and develop important life skills such as teamwork, communication, goal setting, and coping with frustration. In connection with the activity, staff discuss with youth what happened and what skills they used or might have used to be successful.

**Apply.** Staff ask youth what they learned from the activity and how this could help them achieve other goals or be successful in other areas of their lives. Did they learn a new skill? How can they use what they learned in other experiences in their lives?

The first two steps of this Experiential Learning Model—Activity and Observation—are naturally occurring as the participants decide on and engage in the activity. The last three steps—Process, Generalize, and Apply—should be part of the schedule and plan for most any of the activities facilitated by staff, not just an afterthought. For example, if there is one hour in which to conduct an activity, 15–20 minutes of that hour should be set aside for these last three steps.

There are a number of resources available to assist staff in better understanding the different ways to process learning from an activity. In addition, a variety of training tools, such as the *Debriefing Thumbball* and *Debriefing Wheelies*, may be used by facilitators to assist them in asking appropriate debriefing questions. These tools can serve to keep the debriefing process from becoming boring and routine for both the program staff and the youth. These resources can be found at any number of training supply websites and warehouses.

Programming grounded in experiential learning and a PYD approach does not require a specific curriculum, and it is not complicated. However, it does require that staff be intentional in planning activities and experiences for youth, establishing goals for what youth will learn from the experience or activity, and then processing youth learning upon completion of that activity.

**Evidence-Based and Best Practice**

In recent years, a great deal of emphasis has been placed on the use of evidence-based practice in the development and implementation of justice-system interventions and programs. However, there are many different definitions used for
this term. In addition, evidence-based practice and best practice are terms that are often used interchangeably but that have two distinct meanings.

The Austin/Travis County Reentry Roundtable, Evidence-Based Practice Committee, in its “Frequently Asked Questions: Evidence-Based Practices in Criminal Justice Settings” offers the following comparison:[7]

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evidence-Based Practices</th>
<th>Best Practices</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Emphasis on empirical research</td>
<td>• Conventional wisdom</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Control of confounding variables through random assignment</td>
<td>• Repeatable procedures that have proven themselves over time</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Consistency of findings</td>
<td>• Not necessarily proven through rigorous research</td>
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<td>• Cross-site replication</td>
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In other words, evidence-based practice has been subjected to research that is grounded in scientific methods such as the use of control or comparison groups, conducted on multiple programs across various sites and evaluated over an extended period of time. Best practice is based on ideas that are generally accepted to be true by experts in the field but may not have been proven through research.

The National Institute of Corrections (NIC), as part of its project on “Reducing Offender Risk,” highlights eight principles for effective interventions, which are summarized below.

1. **Assess Risk/Needs.** Assessing offenders' risk and needs (focusing on dynamic and static risk factors and criminogenic needs) is essential for implementing the principles of best practice.

2. **Enhance Motivation.** Research strongly suggests that "motivational interviewing" techniques, rather than persuasion tactics, effectively enhance motivation for initiating and maintaining behavior changes.

3. **Target Interventions**
   1. **Risk Principle.** Prioritize supervision and treatment resources for higher risk offenders.
2. **Need Principle.** Target interventions to criminogenic needs (needs causing or likely to cause or lead to criminal behavior).

3. **Responsivity Principle.** Be responsive to temperament, learning style, motivation, gender, and culture when assigning offenders to programs.

4. **Dosage.** Structure 40% to 70% of high-risk offenders' time for 3 to 9 months.

5. **Treatment Principle.** Integrate treatment into full sentence/sanctions requirements.

4. **Skill Train with Directed Practice.** Provide evidence-based programming that emphasizes cognitive-behavior strategies and is delivered by well-trained staff.

5. **Increase Positive Reinforcement.** Apply four positive reinforcments [rewards] for every negative reinforcement [punisher] to support behavior change.

6. **Engage Ongoing Support in Natural Communities.** Realign and actively engage pro-social support for offenders in their communities for positive reinforcement of desired new behaviors.

7. **Measure Relevant Processes/Practices.** An accurate and detailed documentation of case information and staff performance, along with a formal and valid mechanism for measuring outcomes, is the foundation of evidence-based practice.

8. **Provide Measurement Feedback.** Providing feedback builds accountability and maintains integrity, ultimately improving outcomes.

Evidence-informed practice, which may be considered a mixture of evidence-based and best practice, involves using the best available research combined with theory and practical knowledge. This approach to practice is based on an understanding that existing research may not be specific to practice with all individuals or groups or in all contexts or settings and that appropriate adjustments may need to be made based on these unique factors.

Both evidence-based and evidence-informed practice require a theory of change that describes the specific interventions to be used in bringing about is the desired outcome(s); both will have or be in the process of developing a program or procedural manual and training materials specific to the program components and protocol. Evidence-informed programs and practices, as those that are evidence
Based, should be involved in ongoing evaluation and continuous improvement activities for the purpose of building evidence of effectiveness.[8]

Both evidence-based and evidence-informed practice are approaches that are also being applied to criminal justice decision-making. In June, 2008, the NIC entered into a partnership with the Center for Effective Public Policy for the purpose of building a system-wide framework for evidence-based decision making for local criminal justice systems. “A Framework for Evidence-Based Decision-Making in Local Criminal Justice Systems” is in its third edition and available at the NIC website.[2]

**Program Fidelity**

As greater emphasis is placed on the use of evidence-based practice and programs, **fidelity** is a term used more frequently with juvenile justice interventions.

“Fidelity,” as defined in the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, is “the degree to which something matches or copies something else.[10] The OJJDP, in its Model Programs Guide Glossary of Terms, says that fidelity is “the degree to which a program's core services, components, and procedures are implemented as originally designed. Programs replicated with a high degree of fidelity are more likely to achieve consistent results.”[11]

James Bell Associates in its “Evaluation Brief: Measuring Implementation Fidelity” identifies five dimensions, briefly summarized below, that should be considered when assessing the fidelity of program implementation.[12]

1. **Adherence.** The extent to which program components are delivered as specified by the program model, including such things as program content and activities and delivery methods.

2. **Exposure.** The amount of the program delivered in relation to the amount prescribed by the program model. This includes things such as the number of sessions or contacts, the progression, frequency, and duration of sessions, and participant attendance.

3. **Quality of delivery.** The manner in which a program is delivered. This includes things such as provider enthusiasm, confidence, and respectfulness, and the ability to respond to questions and communicate clearly. Provider training and preparedness also impact quality of delivery.

4. **Participant responsiveness.** The engagement of participants in the program, e.g., level of interest, perceptions about the relevance and usefulness of program
content, the level of enthusiasm, and willingness of participants to join in discussions and activities.

5. **Program differentiation.** This refers to the process of identifying the components of the program that are essential for producing positive, desired outcomes.

The Brief also identifies a number of ways in which fidelity may be assessed. These include:

- Self-reports of providers and participants.
- Participant surveys.
- Observations of program delivery.
- Data collection.
- Fidelity assessment provided by the program developer.[13]

Although fidelity is important, it does not mean that a program or curriculum cannot in some ways be adapted or modified. However, adaptations should be well thought out and intentional, as not all adaptations are good ones, and no adaptations should be made to the core components of any program. To effectively determine the impacts and outcomes of any intervention—regardless of whether it is evidence based—fidelity of implementation should be a consideration, and a plan for monitoring fidelity should be a part of program development or adoption.

### Types of Program Adaptations

- **Acceptable adaptations**
  - Changing language—Translating or modifying vocabulary.
  - Replacing images to show youth and families that look like the target audience.
  - Replacing cultural references.
  - Modifying some aspects of activities such as physical contact.
  - Adding relevant, evidence-based content to make the program more appealing to participants.

- **Risky or unacceptable adaptations**
  - Reducing the number or length of sessions or how long participants are involved.
  - Lowering the level of participant engagement.
  - Eliminating key messages or skills learned.
  - Removing topics.
  - Changing the theoretical approach.
○ Using staff or volunteers who are not adequately trained or qualified.
○ Using fewer staff members than recommended.

Types of Programs

Cognitive Behavioral Interventions

The application of evidence-based principles elevates the role of staff working in a confinement setting to include responsibility for facilitating pro-social change in youth. For many, this is a significant departure from prior expectations that focused heavily on the importance of safety, security, and the use of strategies based on punishment. The use of evidence-based principles moves staff beyond simply meeting a youth’s basic needs and offers them the opportunity to build relationships with youth, teach and enhance skills, and manage youth behavior in a safer, more effective manner. The most effective programming combines behavior management systems and cognitive behavioral interventions to improve facility safety and influence pro-social change.

Cognitive behavioral interventions come from two separate psychological theories. Cognitive theory holds that the way a person thinks determines his or her behavior. Behavioral theory says that the environment in which a person finds him or herself also affects the behavior. This blending of cognitive and behavioral theory in working with delinquent youth is based on the belief that much of the behavior that gets youth in trouble stems from a combination of faulty thinking and limited pro-social skills. An individual’s thinking in a situation is triggered by what is happening in the environment combined with the person’s assumptions, attitudes, and beliefs. That thinking then drives a person’s feelings, behavior choices, and consequences. The cognitive behavioral practitioner believes offenders are responsible for their behavior choices, and their thinking is learned and has been reinforced throughout their life. Staff that use a cognitive behavioral approach work to assist youth in identifying unhelpful thinking and the things that trigger that thinking, as well as teaching alternative thinking to support the individual’s ability to respond in a pro-social manner.

The term “cognitive behavioral intervention” does not refer to a specific product or brand of intervention. It is grounded in the simple belief that our thoughts determine our behavior. The emphasis for detention programs with a cognitive foundation is to take daily interactions with youth and use them as teaching opportunities—opportunities to teach youth new skills, raise awareness around
antisocial thinking, and provide a way for them to substitute more rational thoughts through which to understand their situation.

There are two distinct types of cognitive programs: cognitive skill training and restructuring of cognitive events. The two are complimentary, and in developing programs for youth in confinement there is value in incorporating both. Harvey Milkman and Kenneth Wanberg assert that “the two approaches are built on two pathways of reinforcement: (1) strengthening the thoughts that lead to positive behaviors and (2) strengthening behavior due to the positive consequence of that behavior. The former has its roots in cognitive therapy, the latter in behavioral therapy.”[15] The authors agree that both of these approaches are necessary to form the foundation of a cognitive behavioral approach.

Cognitive Restructuring

The cognitive model focuses on the belief that the way someone interprets and thinks about a situation influences his or her behavior choices. Therefore, if detention staff want to change behavior, the focus should be on looking beyond the acting-out behavior a youth demonstrates and on assisting the youth in examining his or her thoughts prior to the behavior. The use of cognitive restructuring in detention involves staff teaching youth to identify the thoughts that occur prior to the problematic behavior. Once those are identified, the priority is to coach the youth to develop more appropriate and realistic thoughts and practice these when similar situations arise. Interventions in cognitive restructuring are based on the notion that youth have learned patterns of thinking that are not helpful and that place them at risk for criminal behavior. A simple tool staff can use to understand and teach this concept is the “thinking chain.” The text in below represents the concept that thinking, feeling, and behavior are connected and sequential; the thoughts we have in a situation determine our feelings, which determine our behavior choices, and then ultimately produce consequences.

**Situation ---&gt; Thinking---&gt; Feeling ---&gt; Behavior---&gt; Consequences**

Referenced above is the thinking chain taught in the Rational Behavior Training (RBT) program used in DuPage County, Illinois, and replicated in numerous detention facilities across the U.S. Following the chain, behavior originates from thinking that is specific to whatever the situation is or what Aaron Beck referred to as “automatic.” The danger of automatic thinking is that it is often unconscious, accepted as reality, and therefore goes unchallenged by the person.[16] Behavior, according to Beck, is also influenced by a person’s core beliefs—those more deeply-held attitudes shaped over a lifetime. Core beliefs are patterns of general beliefs
about the world, how people believe they should be treated and treat others. These core beliefs influence the way a person handles a situation. When youth experience negative consequences, the behavior management program should require staff to review the thinking chain with the youth. Often, discrepancies between behavior and core beliefs exist.

In facilities that use this approach, the main teaching tool used by staff is called a thinking report or, in the case of the DuPage County program, a Rational Self Analysis (RSA). The RSA has sections to help the youth outline the current situation, thinking, and behavior, as well as future alternatives that would result in better outcomes. **An example of an RSA can be found here.**

Reviewing an RSA or a thinking report is a joint process where staff and the youth work together. The role of the staff member is to facilitate the discussion and assist the youth in identifying errors in thinking; the young person completes most of the work in this process. A youth taking responsibility for thoughts and the behavior choices that are a consequence of those thoughts is the desired outcome of the process. The discussion involves three parts (Note: the RSA reflects two separate thinking chains). The first is the situation as it happened (sections A-C3) and then how this changes when the thinking is replaced with more helpful alternatives (sections D3-E3).

1. First, reviewing the situation as it occurred and encouraging a review of events that set the behavior chain into motion. This involves identifying a list of at least five thoughts that occurred in the situation, labeling the feelings that resulted from those thoughts, and discussing the behavior choices and consequences.
2. Next, identifying the “hot thoughts,” those that most strongly influenced the behavior (automatic thoughts) and helping the youth determine if those thoughts were helpful or harmful to the outcome (section D2).
3. Finally, staff coaching the youth to come up with more helpful and realistic thoughts to use in a similar situation in the future. Staff work with the youth to “restructure” or change his or her thinking to include more helpful alternatives. As a result, the alternative thoughts create a new chain of events focused more on healthier feelings, different behavior choices, and the more likely positive outcomes.

This approach assumes that behavior is rooted in thinking and helps to illuminate the possible distortions in the way we may see or understand situations. These distorted views affect one’s ability to appropriately respond to situations. **It is the**
responsibility of confinement staff to help youth see beyond their behavior and examine the thinking that occurs prior to that behavior.

Cognitive Skill Building

The second type of cognitive behavioral intervention involves the staff member teaching, modeling, and reinforcing social and problem-solving skills. The skills lacking among youth in confinement settings range from basic communication to more advanced anger management and problem solving. A good behavior program has positive expectations and rewards youth as they demonstrate appropriate behavior. As a part of cognitive restructuring, staff want the “self-talk” of the youth to focus on desirable outcomes instead of on what to avoid. For example, instead of “don’t swear” a program should teach youth how to talk with others appropriately (e.g., voice tone, eye contact, positive word choice).

An important consideration is the baseline skill level a youth may bring to this process. Youth come from diverse families and backgrounds, many of which may not support what others believe to be appropriate societal expectations. Given the range of youth experience, programs should not expect youth to demonstrate skills they do not have. Effective programs consistently review expectations, teach the desired skills, and provide reinforcement when youth demonstrate these skills to increase the frequency of this behavior. This can be done on an individual basis or within a group setting. It may be helpful to have youth with more time and experience in the program teach or demonstrate the desired behaviors to youth that are new to program.

The Boys Town curriculum, Teaching Social Skills to Youth, is focused on behavior and provides several models for teaching skills and correcting skill deficits.[17] The curriculum provides a structure for teaching both individually and in a group setting. It emphasizes the relationship between a youth and his or her environment and cites the Antecedent–Behavior–Consequence model. This model stresses that no behavior occurs in a vacuum. If a behavior or skill re-occurs, it is because it has been reinforced. In other words, people do what they do because it makes sense to them. As professionals, we may not understand the behavior a youth chooses, but the youth gets something from it or the behavior has previously produced the desired results for them. Using this more developmental approach in a confinement setting requires a focus on what is rewarding to the individual about his or her behavior and attempting to meet this need through more pro-social means.

Reinforcing social skills requires an approach that accomplishes two things. It rewards positive skills and corrects misbehavior. The correction of misbehavior
should be consistent with well-established principles of behavior modification. A consistent and immediate response from staff is far more important than the heavy handedness of a punishment. Confinement facility programs should create environments where positive behavior choices are both acknowledged and encouraged. The use of verbal praise and other incentives are powerful tools to influence positive behavior choices. (See Ch. 14: Behavior Management) [8]

Programs should have multiple means to reward appropriate behavior. Rewards should include immediate, short-, and long-term incentives. The goal is not to pamper youth; it is to help them change this behavior. To be effective in encouraging positive behavior requires that staff immediately link positive consequences to desired behaviors and not dismiss these behaviors as simply what is expected. Bernard Glos Ph.D., former Superintendent at the DuPage County Juvenile Detention Center, consistently reinforced this message in his training of new detention staff with the saying, “Never take any positive behavior for granted.” This shift in thinking assists staff in recognizing that reinforcing positive behavior always has priority over correcting negative behavior. This does not mean that inappropriate choices should be overlooked or not have consequences; however, recognizing positive behavior is consistent with what we know about reinforcement. The behaviors we acknowledge are repeated.

A cognitive behavioral approach increases the professionalism of confinement staff. The role of staff changes from that of an observer or enforcer to that of an active participant in encouraging positive change. Staff work with youth and challenge them to identify high-risk situations and thinking and to think and behave differently. Staff do not accept problematic behavior or make value judgments about youth, but challenge youth to do better. Staff model pro-social skills, and youth practice them. Encouraging positive skills until these become internalized and automatic is the priority. Programming (teaching thinking–behavior connections) and behavior management systems (reinforcing behavior) can be combined to meet the goals of improved facility safety and to influence pro-social change. The positive behavior change a youth experiences changes the way he or she thinks about a situation.

Perhaps the strongest benefit of cognitive behavioral programming is the shift in staff culture that occurs when staff practice the model. A belief in the basic value of people—that change is possible and that work is meaningful—along with a team orientation, is essential for success. The facility becomes a community based on mutual respect, caring, and responsibility. The values and expectations of staff do not differ from the values and expectations of youth.
Focusing solely on eliminating opportunities for misbehavior does youth a disservice by eliminating the opportunity for them to respond appropriately to difficult situations. Staff cannot foresee and prevent every opportunity for misbehavior. When staff depend only on consequences for negative behavior, the likelihood of problem behavior increases. This approach is reactive and punitive, with a limited focus on teaching. A focus on thinking provides staff the ability to get beyond a youths’ inappropriate act. It enables staff to help youth examine their perceptions and take ownership of their choices. Staff must recognize the importance of empowering youth to use own their thoughts and decisions. When released from the confinement setting, youth are better prepared to make difficult decisions.

Moving from an environment that has previously focused on managing and providing consequences for misbehavior, to one where positive behavior is taught, expected, and reinforced, can be challenging. This change in culture requires a significant commitment from facility staff, as they are the ones in closest contact with the youth. Engaging staff in the process of changing the culture is key and “…starts with showing that you C.A.R.E.[18]

• **Communication.** Staff in any organization are often suspicious of change (e.g., what is causing the change?; how long will it last?; what affect will it have on me and on my job?). Engaging direct care staff in the process of decision and choice making related to the change provides them with an opportunity to ask questions, share ideas, and begin to own the process of change. “Informal frontline employees can be great assets in linking their coworkers to the [change in] organizational culture, but only if they feel part of the change and understand how it will benefit them.”

• **Accountability.** Facility administrators must consistently hold themselves and others in the facility accountable for behaving in a manner that supports the change in culture. Staff will need time to learn and understand the changes in programming and the behavioral expectations for youth, as will the youth. Coaching for staff as they begin to implement the desired changes will be key.

• **Rewards and Recognition.** Another key is to reward and recognize the efforts of staff in supporting this new culture. Although acknowledging that change can be difficult, facility administration should visibly recognize those who are supporting the change,
highlighting their specific efforts and publicly thanking them for their investments.

- **Environment of Innovation.** Direct care staff will be keenly aware of the struggles that both they and the youth experience as programmatic and other changes are implemented. This situation can provide unique opportunities for innovation. Staff may have valuable suggestions that should be considered about the changes that are being implemented. Feedback from staff (an idea or suggestion box) would allow administration the opportunity to review and consider staff input and acknowledge staff for their ideas and contributions.

Life Skills and Independent Living Programs

Programs that focus on the development and internalization of basic life skills can also be highly beneficial for youth in confinement facilities. These programs serve as a way to assist youth in preparing to return to the community and teach skills that may have a positive impact on a youth’s behavior and progress in the facility. The implementation of life skills programs can occur in a wide range of youth confinement settings that include juvenile detention and corrections, as well as adult correctional facilities. Facilities that place a strong emphasis on a youth’s successful reentry to the community typically invest in the process of teaching basic life skills and related social skills.

The primary goal of life skills programs in confinement facilities is to assist youth in developing specific skills that will provide the basis for a productive life as a contributing citizen in the community. The major areas that may be addressed in life skills programs include the following:

- Educational skills.
- Vocational skills.
- Employment skills.
- Social skills.
- Anger management/conflict resolution skills.
- Cognitive reasoning and personal accountability skills.
- Daily living skills.

The successful implementation of effective life skills programs in confinement facilities that serve youth is largely dependent upon a number of factors. The impact of the professionalism, knowledge, and commitment of the staff that provide instruction and guidance to youth in life skills programming is critical to the overall
success of the program. An enthusiastic, committed, and caring staff member who consistently demonstrates the desire to assist youth in their personal development is more likely to engage youth in the scheduled programs than a staff that merely goes through the motions. In addition, the facility administration needs to consistently support the life skills programs by ensuring that they have adequate resources and by acknowledging and encouraging the staff and youth who participate in the program.

Life skills programs should use an established curriculum that staff should implement in a consistent manner. Program topics should be based in reality with a positive focus to have the maximum positive effect and impact. Youth and staff should be actively involved in the delivery of the program topic, stressing participation and planning strategies that are tied to reentry issues as well as pertinent facility issues. Because youth in confinement settings typically have short attention spans, lectures that do not provide for or encourage youth participation and interaction should be avoided whenever possible. (See Ch. 18: Transition Planning and Reentry).

Life skills programs, like other facility programs, should be evaluated on a regular basis to ensure that the goals and objectives of the program are being achieved. Staff and youth should have input into evaluation of the program. This input can be gathered using structured interviews, surveys, and comment and suggestion forms. Information gathered from the evaluations can be used to improve the program.

Effective life skills programs in confinement facilities can provide youth with valuable tools that may not only assist in their successful reentry to the community but can have a positive impact on their adjustment and degree of progress within the facility.

Independent living programs can be highly beneficial as part of the reentry process for some youth. Independent living programs are primarily designed for older youth who, for any reason, are unable to return to a stable, appropriate home environment. As an alternative, these youth are provided with living accommodations in the community along with ongoing support provided by staff with the correctional jurisdiction or a contract agency. Life skills programming assists them in living independently and successfully in the community. Youth receive instruction and guidance in areas such as securing and maintaining employment, household budgeting and management, education, health and wellness, and accessing community resources.
While in the independent living program, youth typically receive varying degrees of case management services and supervision from the supervising jurisdiction’s reintegration staff (parole, probation, aftercare, reentry). Financial support and other resources may also be provided by the supervising jurisdiction or other entities with the ultimate goal of having the youth attain the skills necessary for self-sufficiency and subsequently transition from the independent living program to release from formal supervision. Failure to meet the expectations or contract provisions of the independent living program can result in a range of consequences for the youth up to, and including, removal from the program and return to the youth confinement facility or other placement.

Family Involvement

Effects of Youth Confinement on Parents

Most often, when people think about the confinement experience and programs in confinement facilities, they immediately focus on the youth who has been confined. The confinement experience can be traumatic for any youth, but especially for those who have not been confined before. Being afraid for personal safety and property, being upset by the separation from home, and having feelings of isolation or failure are common. Through the implementation of effective programs, many of these negative feelings can be dealt with and turned into constructive learning experiences.

However, the confinement experience does not touch only the youth. Often, the youth’s parents will be as unfamiliar with confinement as the youth. Parents worry about their son’s or daughter’s safety, well-being, and property; they wonder how long confinement will last; they have to learn how to make their way through a complex justice system; and they worry if the experience, including the possible cost of confinement, will result in any new economic hardships for the family. Many parents also wonder where they have “gone wrong” when they see their child under lock and key. Some parents throw their hands up in disgust over their child’s conduct, and a few may even abandon their children, hoping that the courts will now provide care for their delinquent child.

A child’s confinement can create a new set of problems for parents and guardians. These problems go beyond the need to hire an attorney, appear in court, and meet with confinement facility staff, probation or aftercare officers, social workers, and psychologists. The youth may be the oldest child in the family with duties and responsibilities in the home that will need to be taken over by younger siblings. In some cases, the youth may have been providing a source of income for the family, and the confinement decision can have an adverse economic impact on the family.
This is an excellent opportunity for staff at the facility to engage in and play a leadership role in working with the parents of the youth. The confinement facility may be the first point of contact between the parent or guardian and the juvenile justice or criminal justice system. Facility staff should be prepared to offer information, assistance, and support not only to the youth, but also to the youth’s family members. (See Ch. 18: Transition Planning and Reentry: The Role of Family Engagement and Visitation).

Programs and Services for Parents

The old saying, “strike while the iron is hot,” is most relevant at this time. When a youth is confined, there is an excellent opportunity to engage the youths’ parents or guardians in any intervention and treatment planning. Parents should be recognized for having the unique historical perspective they have on the youth’s development and experiences and should be viewed as partners in the intervention process. All too often, parents are excluded as potential contributors to an effective treatment intervention for the youth. Parent involvement is also important to successful planning for reentry.

Many parents and guardians recognize that they need to develop new parenting skills and choose to attend parenting education courses and family counseling sessions. Some even seek individual counseling. Appropriately trained facility or other staff may also offer crisis intervention, family counseling, parent self-help groups, and substance abuse programs for the parents of addicted youth.

Group counseling with parents, in which a qualified facilitator meets with several parents for 60 to 90 minutes per week, has been shown to be highly effective in helping parents manage the confinement crisis and strengthen their parenting skills. During these self-help sessions, parents have the opportunity learn from each other and identify approaches that can be applied in their home situations. They may receive guidance from other parents who have successfully handled similar problems. Often, the facilitator does not need to do more than convene the meeting and support the group in discussing whatever issues may be of concern to them. Parents identify with other parents, particularly in this type of crisis situation. As a result, parents may be willing to try new approaches in working with their children.

Parent groups can include the parents of confined youth, as well as those of previously confined youth. Facilitators may also wish to engage probation officers or aftercare workers in the group discussions. In this way, probation or aftercare staff can continue these groups in the community to support those parents whose children remain under formal supervision after release.
Other forms of family group counseling have also been successful. Using the skills of trained substance abuse counselors, parents can be educated on critical issues related to substance abuse. They can learn to identify the signs and symptoms of a substance abuse problem in their children and identify resources available to address the problem. In the process, parents may also realize they have a substance abuse problem of their own and seek help for themselves.

In some cases, crisis intervention counseling and victim awareness can be useful to parents, particularly when the victim is another member of the family or when the parents themselves are the victims. Involving parents in these kinds of group processes can benefit the family.

Although the length of stay for youth in juvenile detention facilities is often short, compared to post dispositional correctional placements, these short-term facilities should still offer programs and services to strengthen families and provide assistance to parents as needed. Parents will respond to an environment of genuine care and help. A nonthreatening, “we care” attitude, combined with a self-help process, may help parents manage their children in a more positive and constructive manner.

Family programming begins with family-friendly visitation policies. Confinement facilities that serve youth should make family visitation available as frequently as possible, preferably not less often than least twice weekly. Family members should be able to make arrangements for special visits when work, childcare, or other unavoidable scheduling conflicts prohibit them from visiting during regularly scheduled visitation times.

The Annie E. Casey Juvenile Detention Alternatives Initiative (JDAI) facility assessment standards recommend the following related to visitation:[19]

1. Youth may visit with parents/guardians, adult relatives, and family friends. Staff encourages visitation with the youth’s (male or female) own children, and the parent/child relationship is facilitated through phone and mail contact and appropriate visiting space. Younger relatives (siblings or cousins) may visit with approval of the youth’s counselor or probation officer. Written policies clearly describe the approval procedure for special visitors.
2. Family visiting occurs on several days of the week. Staff posts a schedule of visiting hours and rules.
3. Families may schedule visits at other times with permission from the facility administrator or designee. Written policies clearly describe procedures for special visits.
4. Visits are at least one hour in length and are contact visits. Staff imposes noncontact visits only when there is a specific risk to the safety and security of the facility.

5. Staff does not deprive youth on disciplinary status of visits as a punishment. Youth on disciplinary status may have visits with family members unless such visits would pose an immediate threat to the safety and security of the facility.

6. Staff may supervise the visiting area, but may not monitor conversations, absent a reasonable suspicion that a crime, escape, or threat to safety or security may occur.

7. If staff conducts searches following visits, they use the least intrusive measure to protect against the introduction of contraband into the facility. Written policy and procedure clearly describe the facility’s practice.

8. Written policies, procedures, and actual practices ensure that searches of visitors, beyond routine security such as metal detectors, are limited to cases where there is reasonable suspicion that the person is bringing in contraband. Staff posts the search policies so visitors are aware of the rules.

9. Visitors are able to ask questions or register complaints about the treatment of youth. Facility staff or administrators promptly reply to such questions or complaints.

10. There are regular family forums at which families of detained youth may voice issues of concern, offer suggestions for improvement, and obtain needed information about institutional policies and practices.

11. Transportation arrangements are made available to assist visitors in getting to and from the facility if the facility is not otherwise accessible via public transportation.

**Additional Programming**

**Volunteer and Mentoring Programs**

Volunteers and mentors are people who donate their time and effort to enhance the facility’s services, activities, and operations. Volunteers and mentors are selected on the basis of their skills or personal qualities, without regard to disability, race, sex, or national origin.

Some common examples of services that volunteers and mentors can provide are recreation, counseling, education or tutoring, and clerical duties. The following issues are important regarding the use of volunteers and mentors:

- Volunteers and mentors should be at least 21 years of age and should have appropriate training or licensing, when required.
All volunteers and mentors should know and follow the policies and procedures for the facility and for the volunteer and mentor program.

Volunteers and mentors should receive some form of identification that designates the individual’s name and status with the agency.

Volunteers and mentors should operate under the same insurance and liability rules and regulations as facility employees.

A job description for each volunteer and mentor position should be developed, and volunteers and mentors should go through an interview process, similar to that for facility employees.

The prospective volunteer or mentor should provide at least three references, one of which is work related, and sign a release of information.

Criminal background and child abuse and sex offender registry checks should be conducted before assigning a volunteer or mentor to any program responsibility that involves direct interaction with youth. Follow-up checks should be scheduled along with staff background checks or other inquiries.

Once a volunteer or mentor is approved, the facility should create a personnel file and have the volunteer sign a confidentiality statement regarding juvenile information.

All volunteers and mentors should receive the same orientation and review of facility policies and procedures as paid staff members and should be encouraged to participate in any training that is regularly offered to employees of the agency, space allowing.

The facility administrator should formally recognize and acknowledge the contributions that volunteers and mentors make to the youth and to the facility.

All volunteers and mentors should be supervised. Violations by volunteers or mentors of agency policies and procedures should be dealt with in a fair and impartial fashion.

Whenever possible, volunteer and mentor services should be included in the annual budget prepared by the facility.

Students working at a facility in a designated internship or practicum should operate under an intern or practicum agreement established between the facility and the educational program or institution, not under the volunteer and mentor program policies and procedures.

A report on volunteer and mentor services should be prepared annually and submitted to the facility director to complete a program evaluation and needs assessment.[20]

Balanced and Restorative Community Justice (BARJ)
Since the mid-1990s, the Balanced and Restorative Justice (BARJ) Model has been a viable alternative to the popular get-tough approach to crime that became prevalent in the late 1980s. Although BARJ constitutes a philosophical structure rather than a specific program, it provides a solid framework or foundation for the development and implementation of effective, helpful programs in confinement facilities that serve youth. By applying the principles of BARJ to program development, facilities can move from a retributive or punitive focus to one of restoration and positive growth.

The basic principles of restorative justice are as follows:

- Crime is injury.
- Crime hurts individual victims, communities, and juvenile offenders and creates an obligation to make things right.
- All parties should be a part of the response to the crime, including the victim (if he or she wishes) the community, and the juvenile offender.
- The victim’s perspective is central to deciding how to repair the harm caused by the crime.
- Accountability for the juvenile offender means accepting responsibility and acting to repair the harm done.
- The community is responsible for the well being of all its members, including both victim and offender.
- All human beings have dignity and worth.
- Restoration means repairing the harm and rebuilding relationships in the community and is the primary goal of restorative justice.
- Results are measured by how much repair was done rather than by how much punishment was inflicted.
- Crime control cannot be achieved without active involvement of the community.
- The juvenile justice process is respectful of age, abilities, sexual orientation, family status, and diverse cultures and backgrounds—whether racial, ethnic, geographic, religious, economic, or other—and all are given equal protection and due process.[21]

These principles provide the foundation for the “balanced approach,” which addresses the three main goals of accountability, competency development, and community safety. It is in these three areas that facilities can develop and implement specific programs for youth that are consistent with BARJ. Although the types of programs will differ depending on the pre-adjudication or post-dispositional function of the facility, all facilities can implement effective programs that are consistent with the BARJ philosophy.
The **Accountability** goal addresses the need for the youth to accept responsibility for his or her behavior and attempt to repair the harm to others or to the community as a result of the behavior. Taking ownership for one’s behavior and making amends to the victim(s), represents restoration as opposed to punishment, which is retributive in nature. Accountability, in BARJ terms, provides a learning opportunity for youth not typically found in the use of punitive sanctions.

Facility administrators that address the goal of accountability should develop and implement programs for youth that focus on their accepting responsibility for the behavior that caused harm and specifically communicating that ownership to those who were harmed. Depending upon the facility structure and environment, accountability-focused programs could include family group conferencing, restitution, face-to-face meetings or mediation, and verbal or written apologies. Engaging victims can be a powerful tool in addressing the accountability goal but needs to be carefully planned and supervised. When developing and implementing programs that engage victims, care must be taken to avoid any further trauma or harm to the victim or the youth. Youth in detention and not yet adjudicated may be provided programs that are generic in nature rather than based upon the specific offense.

The **Competency Development** goal addresses the need for youth to develop new skills that will enable them to function more effectively and positively in the community. Many facilities implement effective programs that address this goal area. Programs that focus on developing social skills, life skills, anger management, empathy, cognitive behavioral training, communication skills, work or academic skills, or problem solving can be tailored to meet the BARJ competency development expectation. Unlike the accountability goal, both pre-adjudicated and post-dispositional youth can benefit from effective competency development programs.

The **Community Safety** goal addresses the need for youth to return to the community after accepting responsibility for the harm they have done and developing new competencies to prevent further harmful behavior to individuals or the community at large. Rather than focusing on removing the youth from the community and imposing punishment to achieve community safety, BARJ focuses on strengths-based approaches and graduated sanctions designed to assist youth in becoming more responsible citizens. Facilities should initiate the reentry process at the very beginning of the youth’s stay and integrate BARJ focused programs with an individualized reentry plan throughout his or her placement as part of the overall treatment and service plan. The goal of community safety can be achieved through the development and implementation of effective BARJ programs for youth.
Community Service Programs

Community service is most often referred to in the context of a sentence following disposition or adjudication of guilt. Community service is frequently used as a substitute for restitution.

When a youth has been found guilty, a judge will often impose a specific number of hours of community service in lieu of confining the youth. In these cases, the community service usually benefits governmental or nonprofit agencies in the community. In most cases, the person providing a community service is under probation or other appropriate juvenile justice staff supervision.

What makes community service for youth in confinement facilities unique is that the youth remain in secure care throughout the period of community service unless the court or jurisdictional authority determines otherwise. Therefore, projects that can occur inside of facilities should be considered over projects that require the youth to be transported elsewhere. The fact that youth are in secure care should not be a barrier that will keep them from doing community service work during their period of incarceration.

Some examples of community service that can be accomplished within secure confinement facilities are the following:

- Helping civic and nonprofit groups with mass mailings. Youth in confinement can fold and stuff envelopes as a community service project. The facility should not allow youth to be involved in political campaigns or work for political candidates, because this would constitute a conflict of interest. The facility administrator and staff should be aware of potential conflicts and disclose them whenever possible.
- Becoming certified in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and first aid. Although this is not a direct community service project, knowledge of these skills can be of help to the community later on.
- Creating artwork and crafts projects for senior citizen centers, nursing homes, and municipal buildings. Many young people in confinement are very talented. However, they need to be encouraged to use and demonstrate these talents. By sharing works of art with people in nursing homes, hospitals, and senior citizen centers, youth can feel they are enhancing the quality of life for others. Municipal buildings—such as county buildings, city halls, and libraries—often welcome artwork done by youth. The artwork can be displayed as a separate project or as part of a larger exhibit, with recognition that the contributions came from justice-involved youth. Through this approach, the public may begin
to understand that many youth caught in the web of juvenile delinquency or criminal behavior are also very talented, capable, and worthy of investments made in them.

- Participating in seasonal activities to provide support to needy families and children. These types of activities can be accomplished in cooperation with the giving campaigns of civic organizations.

Youth in confinement facilities can make positive and useful contributions to their community even while in secure care. The recognition of their talents and their willingness to give can raise the youth’s self-esteem and increase the public’s understanding of these youth. Creativity and innovation are all that is needed to develop a strong community service program in a facility. Community service is a low-cost program with great potential benefit for the community, the facility and the youth.

Religious Services

ACA standards provide clear direction related to religious services. Guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution, access to religious services must be available to confined youth. The ACA standards provide definitions of services and information on access to religious services by the youth, and the requirements for staff.[22] They also require written policies and procedures that govern the institution’s religious services programs.

Although the ACA standards highlight the importance of a religious services program, they do not discuss the specific nature or content of such a program.

What is the purpose of religious services for youth?

- To offer culturally-neutral values that may enhance human growth and offer a perspective that looks beyond cultural materialism, while acknowledging the disparity of justice in our world and society.
- To meet adults who bridge the gap between social control demands and the youth’s need for affirmation as a human—adults who “walk their talk.”
- To instill the challenge of “living all we are intended to be” rather than “settling for what we can get away with.”
- To encourage youth to explore their spiritual capacity for growth and change.
- To provide opportunities for youth to articulate or ritualize their faith.
- To teach youth to pray and to create opportunities for prayerful moments.
- To provide for the spiritual needs of the residents as an integral component of holistic treatment.
• To provide encouragement and support at a time when youth are in trouble.

What benefits, if any, do youth receive from participation in religious services?

• It provides youth with comfort.
• It may provide youth with interaction with volunteers of diverse religious backgrounds. Detained youth are accustomed to broken promises, especially from people who do things because they get paid. Volunteers come because they want to come, and even if the visit comes only once per month, it is predictable.
• It provides youth with a nurturing of spirituality.
• It provides youth with a general emotional catharsis, which may be useful from an institutional management standpoint that if instigated by detention staff, might be questionable from an ethical standpoint.
• It gives youth ideas and messages to ponder.
• It provides youth with the opportunity of choice (to attend or not to attend).

Who is most effective in sharing religious thought with youth?

• Someone who obviously likes people, and youth in particular.
• Someone who is nonjudgmental.
• Someone who seriously cares for youth and will continue to visit even when the response is less than desired.
• Someone who listens first, who “walks with” second, and who proclaims last.
• Someone of faith who lives what he or she professes; youth can spot hypocrisy.
• Someone who is open to youth’s spiritual needs and does not try to convert them or threaten them with “fire and brimstone.”
• Someone who shares faith and who tries to build a relationship first—which takes time and patience.
• Someone who is comfortable with “unfinished products.”
• Someone who is comfortable being an adult in a youth setting, not being a “buddy.”
• Someone who can say “no” without rancor, accusation, or challenge and who speaks from a sense of self-limits that are rooted in values rather than rules.
• Someone who is consistent in sharing his or her faith and who comes as scheduled.
• Someone who respects the youth, such as campus ministers, clergy, or volunteers.

What are the most effective ways of sharing religious thought with youth?
• Through careful sharing in small groups, seldom through large groups.
• Through experiential learning exercises.
• Through the words of their culture’s spiritual leaders.
• Through offering the choice not to participate.
• Through a time for personal prayer.
• Through religious education formats that address youth issues and teach youth faith skills.
• Through role playing that helps youth learn how to put spiritual principles into practice in their lives.
• Through song. Youth who have the talent or the yearning to share their voice in song can be deeply affected by having the chance to sing.

What is the most effective way of developing spiritual growth in youth?

• Modeling spiritual principles without being “syrupy” or offensive.
• Offering meaningful and participatory worship experiences, scriptural study that relates to life issues, involvement in service projects (serving at soup kitchens or building wheel chair ramps), and retreats.

In some facilities, the person responsible for religious services is called the chaplain. In larger institutions, the chaplain may hold a full-time paid position funded by the institution or by the local religious community. For example, Youth for Christ organizations frequently include local juvenile facilities in their ministry. In smaller facilities, religious services may be provided by one or more members of the local clergy who commit their time and services on a voluntary basis. The Reverend Ken Ponds’ questions also addressed the role of the chaplain in the facility.

What should be the relationship of the chaplain to the administration of the facility?

• There should be a tension present, which is obvious to all and which is respectful. The chaplain should not seek to obstruct or be a tool for institutional management. The integrity of the chaplain has only a fleeting chance in the eyes of the youth; the chaplain must be perceived as being his or her own person.
• The best situation would have several denominations assist with the compensation of the chaplain to remind both the chaplain and the institution that the chaplain truly serves.

What role does the chaplain play for youth and for the staff who serve those youth?
Support and an opportunity to vent for all.
Reinforcement to treat one another humanely.

According to Jeong Woong Cheon and Edward Canda, “Adolescence is a particularly intense period of ideological hunger, a striving for meaning and purpose, and desire for relationship and connectedness…In particular, youth spirituality is regarded as young people’s developmental search engine for connectedness, meaning, and being in touch with what is most vital to one’s life…”[23] For many youth in confinement, access to religious and spiritual services and programs may serve to address this striving and meet these needs.

Recreation Programs

One critical aspect of programming is that it must provide a means for the constructive channeling of energy (physical activity). There is a special need for involvement in noncompetitive sports and activities that allow for differences in strength, dexterity, and size. Recreation has the potential for raising a youth’s self-esteem and for supporting the establishment of positive relationships between staff and youth. Handled poorly, it may also have a negative effect in these relationships.

Noncompetitive Activities

Even though most juvenile delinquents are risk-takers, for a variety of reasons, they are generally not involved in organized sports or athletic programs. Because most confinement facilities have a gym and most juvenile offenders have had experience playing basketball, basketball frequently becomes the predominant form of recreation. In addition to sometimes excluding female youth, basketball becomes a convenient recreation strategy that requires minimal involvement and planning on the part of staff.

If the primary goal is maximum involvement of youth in a recreation program, youth must be encouraged to participate. One very effective way to increase participation is through the use of noncompetitive games. These activities are highly inclusive and nonthreatening. They provide staff with numerous opportunities encourage and praise youth. As youth become more trusting and confident, they are more likely to cooperate with others, follow the guidance and direction of staff, and engage in more vigorous physical activities. If approached gradually, noncompetitive games can lead youth into more demanding or challenging recreational activities, such as physical fitness and aerobics.
The New Games movement, which promotes the use of noncompetitive games, began in the late 1960s. These types of games can and have been used successfully with youth in confinement settings. Noncompetitive sports and activities allow for differences in strength, dexterity, and size, encouraging all participants to engage in play. (See Ch. 14: Behavior Management)

Physical Fitness

It is almost impossible to enjoy good health and achieve optimum physical fitness without a planned program of regular exercise. Therefore, physical fitness in youth confinement facilities should include a planned and supervised program designed to maintain a healthy and appropriate body weight and keep a youth's muscles well toned. Proper daily exercise is important to better health, a longer life, and a greatly improved quality of life. Exercise has also been proven to alleviate depression and decrease anxiety.

Facility staff can initiate and develop a recreation program to fit the facility’s philosophy and mission. A recreation program that works well combines old-fashioned physical fitness (calisthenics, running, and weight training) with a variety of sports and games.

A physical fitness program should be approached sequentially. Youth should have an opportunity to work up to vigorous and strenuous exercise routines. At every opportunity along the way, staff should encourage and reinforce participation, effort, accomplishment, and the healthy feelings associated with physical exercise. The sequential nature of a program should include stretching exercises, calisthenics, aerobics, running or jogging programs, and weight training (stationary machines as opposed to free weights). A staff member trained in exercise physiology or physical education should supervise physical fitness programs.

Vigorous exercise is an important component of a good recreation program. The difference between a vigorous therapeutic recreation component and a military style boot camp is not the level of hard work or the expenditure of energy on exercising and physical fitness. Therapeutic recreation programs are not intended to demean, humiliate, or degrade youth by having a staff member yell at and harass them in a stereotypical drill-sergeant fashion. It is not within the legitimate role of youth confinement facilities to attempt to add to the pain and suffering inherent in being forcibly separated from home and society.

A physical fitness program should include a planned program of resistance training for everyone. Staff should make it enjoyable and never talk negatively about anyone’s
physical condition or appearance. An overweight youth should be given exercises with high repetitions to help burn fat. A walking and jogging program is also recommended. In addition, staff should advise youth about the advantages of maintaining a healthy diet versus eating junk food and fast food.

As important as good physical fitness is, youth should never be forced to participate in an exercise program, but should be encouraged to become involved. The effort is most important. Encouragement and praise are always needed, especially for youth with a poor self image. Most youth respond in a positive way to physical activity, and their behaviors often improve in other parts of the program. Continued participation should be contingent on positive behavior in all areas of the daily program. As structured team games, sports can provide numerous learning experiences for youth. Sports, sports, and more sports should be offered to all youth in a comprehensive recreation program—which means there should be variety in the activities available to youth. By offering as many types of sports as possible, there is a greater chance that each youth will find one suited to his or her interests and abilities.

Before engaging in any sports, staff should teach youth the rules and work on the basic fundamentals for that particular sport. Sports in which youth may participate include basketball, football, floor hockey, softball, volleyball, weightlifting, running, aerobics, golf, handball, and soccer. Protective gear, flexible equipment, and special foam balls make many of these sports safe for a wide range of youth, usable in co-educational situations, and appropriate for play indoors in a gym, recreation room, or large dayroom.

Leisure Time

Youth in confinement facilities are typically high-risk youth who need structure. However, leisure time is an important component in all confinement programs. How and when leisure time is scheduled and used is important. Many facilities run a very structured program schedule that allows youth little free time. Others subject youth to excessive hours of television or card playing because of insufficient staff and other resources, overcrowding, or a belief that programs reward youth for their delinquent behavior. This latter approach does not qualify as constructive leisure time activity.

Staff must understand their responsibilities for programming and must adequately supervise youth at all times. High-quality programming also requires adequate space and equipment.

Leisure-time activities should be chosen with thought and care and scheduled for a specific time within the daily schedule. Facilities may schedule leisure-time activities
in the afternoon or evenings during the week and anytime during waking hours on
the weekends. Such activities might include watching television or videos, listening to
music, playing video games, reading books or magazines, writing letters, studying,
playing board, table, or card games. Staff should be vigilant to ensure that card
games do not involve any form of gambling.

Some facilities have a game room, which may provide access to additional leisure
time activities for youth. Game rooms provide an opportunity for youth who do not
enjoy sports to engage in other types of recreation, such as ping-pong, foosball,
pinball, and air hockey. Many facilities also have media libraries where youth may
access books for recreational reading and computers for listening to music or for
playing instructional games or solving puzzles. The resources available in media
centers or libraries, while recreational, also serve to complement the facility’s
education program.

Staff interactions with youth during leisure time should be ongoing. It may take place
in the dayroom, gymnasium or game room, or it may involve a simple talk about the
youth’s day. Regardless, staff involvement in leisure time activities with youth can
contribute to improved levels of mutual respect and positive working relationships.

Infrastructure to Ensure Successful and Sustainable Programs

Regardless of the type, size, or budget of the facility, it is imperative that facility
administrators provide a solid foundation and support for the development and
implementation of quality programs for youth in confinement. This includes
ensuring that staff are well trained and prepared to deliver programming and that
there are adequate resources (space, equipment, supplies) to support those programs.
Local churches, service clubs—such as Kiwanis, Rotary and Lions Clubs—volunteer
groups, and local philanthropic organizations are often willing to provide financial
and other forms of support for youth programs wherever they are delivered. Active
leadership and ongoing commitment shown by facility administration can
demonstrate to staff and youth that these programs are a priority and will be
supported in the future.

To be viewed as a legitimate organizational priority, programming should be
articulated in the facility mission, vision, and guiding principles. In addition,
programming should be included and fully described in the facility policy and
procedure manual. Program manuals, lesson plans, and other materials should be
regularly reviewed and updated; they should be consistently available to staff for
them to effectively implement the program. Administrators should evaluate and hold
staff accountable. Failure to do so can send the message to staff and youth that programs are really not a priority, which can negatively impact the level of commitment, success, and sustainability of programs for youth. Quality programs foster positive changes in youth and contribute to a more productive and positive environment for both youth and staff.

**Reentry**

The vast majority of youth released from confinement facilities will return home. The process of reentry is focused on ensuring that young people making this return home have access to the supervision, services, and supports they may need to be successful. In a *Juvenile and Family Court Journal* article entitled, “Reentry and Removal: Implications for Juvenile Confinement Facilities,” authors David Roush, James Moeser, and Timothy Walsh say that “JOR [Juvenile Offender Reentry] encourages citizens, government agencies, social services organizations, and community-based organizations, such as faith-based organizations, to make reentry the highest priority in programs and services to youths in juvenile confinement facilities.”[26] The authors go on to say that “a systematic involvement of community-based programs throughout incarceration enhances the likelihood of successful community reintegration. The public knows and trusts these community-based programs, and their involvement with the juvenile confinement facility enhances the public’s cooperation with reentry programs.”[27]

Reentry planning should be part of the overall intervention planning for youth in confinement and as such should begin at the point of placement in any type of confinement facility. The key word in this statement is “planning,” as release from confinement does not by itself ensure the successful reentry of youth into those communities. The ultimate goal of all reentry planning and service delivery is total reintegration of the youth into their families, schools, and workplaces. Successful reintegration includes achievement of positive youth outcomes (e.g., educational achievements, employment, civic involvement) and increased public safety (e.g., reductions in recidivism). (See Ch. 18: Transition Planning and Reentry).[9]

According to Shay Bilchik, there are five key areas emerging in youth reentry policy and practice:

1. Integrating the science of adolescent brain development into the design of reentry initiatives.
2. Ensuring that reentry initiatives build on youths’ strengths and assets to promote pro-social development.
3. Engaging families and community members in a meaningful manner throughout the reentry process.
4. Prioritizing education and employment as essential elements of a reentry plan.
5. Providing a stable, well-supported transition to adulthood that helps to create lifelong connections.[28]

Each of these elements is a critical area for consideration by those individuals and organizations planning for reentry and services for youth.

Since 1987, OJJDP has been funding activities, evaluation, and research specific to the development of aftercare programming for juvenile justice-involved youth. The result of these investments has been the development of an Intensive Aftercare Program (IAP) model.[29] The IAP model identifies the following five principles for reentry program development.

1. Preparing juveniles for progressively increased responsibility and freedom in the community.
2. Facilitating interaction and involvement between juveniles and the community.
3. Working with offenders and targeted community support systems (families, peers, schools, employers) on those qualities needed for constructive interactions that advance the juveniles’ reintegration into the community.
4. Developing new resources and support services as needed.
5. Monitoring and testing the capacity of juvenile offenders to receive—and the community to provide—services and support.

These principles can be used to guide justice system personnel and community service providers—either of which may provide reentry and aftercare programs—in the development of services for youth as they transition to the community.

In addition to this Guide, there are many resources available for use in planning reentry programs.

- The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention’s (OJJDP’s) Model Programs Guide (MPG) [11] contains information about evidence-based juvenile justice and youth prevention, intervention, and reentry programs. It is a resource for practitioners and communities about what works, what is promising, and what does not work in juvenile justice, delinquency prevention, and child protection and safety.[30]
- The National Reentry Resource Center [12] provides education, training, and technical assistance to states, tribes, territories, local governments, service
providers, nonprofit organizations, and corrections institutions working on offender reentry.[31]

Conclusion

Youth in confinement facilities are some of the nation’s most troubled and troublesome youth. The time they spend in confinement and what they do during this time are crucial. For many of these youth, their belief in themselves has been shattered and distorted. They are confined against their will, and the earlier supportive relations in the home and community are altered or severed as they pass beyond locked doors.

Programs may be structured differently from one facility to another, depending on such things as the facility size and purpose, the availability of financial and other resources—including staff—and any number of other factors. Whatever the structure or format, programming is critical to the ability of staff to effectively manage the behavior of youth. Programming provides youth with constructive activities and staff with opportunities to engage with youth, to help them learn new skills, and to feel better about themselves and their abilities.

Programming must be available to all youth at the facility, and confinement facility staff must see as their mission addressing youth and public protection and affording youth maximum opportunities for individual growth and change.

References


Merriam-Webster, n. “fidelity.”


**Bibliography**


**Endnotes**


[15] As quoted in David W. Rous,


[27] Ibid, 3.


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