



Integrating Education and Training in Young Adult Diversion Programs

Technical Assistance Brief



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF CAREER, TECHNICAL, AND ADULT EDUCATION
DIVISION OF ACADEMIC AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION



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U.S. Department of Education,
Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education,
Division of Academic and Technical Education

August 2021

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August 2021

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Abbreviations

ACTE	Association for Career and Technical Education
ADAP	Alabama Disabilities Advocacy Program
ATB	ability to benefit
CAPE	<i>Career and Professional Education Act</i>
CDT	Central Diversion Team
CHI	Community Healing Initiative
CTE	career and technical education
DCJS	New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services
DDPC	New York Developmental Disabilities Planning Council
DIVERT	Diversion Initiative for Vocational Employability Related to Technology
DJJ	Department of Juvenile Justice
ED	U.S. Department of Education
EOPS	Extended Opportunity Programs and Services
IDEA	<i>Individuals with Disabilities Education Act</i>
IEP	individualized education program
LACDMH	Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health
LACOE	Los Angeles County Office of Education
LINCS	Literacy Information and Communication System
MAP	Multidisciplinary Assessment and Planning
OCDB	Orange County Development Board
OCDE	Orange County Department of Education
OCLPA	Orange County Local Partnership Agreement
OCREP	Orange County Re-Entry Partnership
OYA	Oregon Youth Authority
PCRN	Perkins Collaborative Resources Network
PERKINS V	<i>Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act</i>

PHMC	Philadelphia Health Management Corporation
POIC	Portland Opportunities Industrialization Center
PTSD	post-traumatic stress disorder
RAHS	Rosemary Anderson High School
ROC	Restoring Our Communities
SCDD	State Council on Developmental Disabilities
T.E.E.M.	Transitional Education and Employment Management
TMCC	Truckee Meadows Community College
WDACS	Los Angeles County Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services
WIOA	<i>Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act</i>
WOW	Working on Womanhood

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Executive Summary

Young adults (ages 16–24) are involved with the criminal justice system in disproportionate numbers compared to other age groups. A growing body of research shows that this population is closer developmentally to teenagers than to older adults and, therefore, it may be more effective to address their criminal behavior with age-appropriate treatments, including diversion programs. Diversion programs redirect individuals, typically youth and first-time offenders, from prosecution and incarceration to community-based programming, case management, and supports.

In 2017, the U.S. Department of Education, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Justice, funded a three-year technical assistance initiative that helped 16 state and local partnerships provide their justice-involved young adult populations with alternatives to prosecution and incarceration, including special education, career and technical education (CTE), and other workforce development opportunities. The initiative resulted in a Young Adult Diversion Framework and other tools and resources to support diversion programs. This technical assistance brief summarizes the project outcomes and the partnerships' experiences participating in the initiative. It concludes with several recommendations for young adult diversion programs. The appendices contain overviews of special education, CTE, and career pathways; a research brief; and partnership profiles.

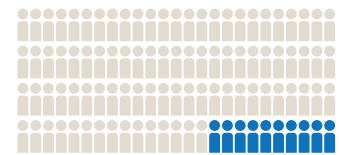


Introduction

Young adults (ages 16–24) make up 10 percent of the U.S. population but account for 29 percent of all arrests (Perker and Chester 2017). Once involved in the criminal justice system, they are more likely to reoffend than older adults (Carson and Golinelli 2014; U.S. Department of Justice et al. 2014). Research in cognitive brain development helps to explain this higher rate of criminal behavior: young adults’ brains are still maturing until their mid-20s, and they are more likely to push boundaries, lack impulse control, be susceptible to peer influences, and not consider the consequences of their actions (Mulvey 2011; National Research Council 2013). Many young adults who engage in criminal behavior are also dealing with a range of other challenges, including behavioral health issues and a lack of stable housing, health care, and other supports (Morton, Dworsky, and Samuels 2017; Mumola and Karberg 2006). They also have lower education levels and greater special education needs than their non-justice-involved peers and lack the necessary job-training skills to secure and maintain gainful employment (Leone and Weinberg 2012; Rampey et al. 2016; Vallas 2016).

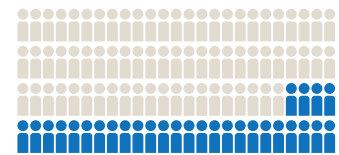
In the past, these young adults would be arrested, sentenced, and confined in juvenile detention centers or adult correctional facilities with few, if any, of their unique needs addressed. State and local criminal justice systems and their partners, however, are changing their approach to this vulnerable population. Rather than incarcerating young adults, which can increase criminal behavior, recidivism, and system costs, a growing number of these agencies are establishing diversion programs that redirect individuals, typically first-time offenders, from prosecution and incarceration to community-based programming, case management, and other supports. These programs are designed to hold young adults accountable for their actions while reducing the stigma and risks of criminal socialization associated with incarceration (U.S. Department of Justice 2017). Studies of diversion programs generally have found that participants, compared to their peers who become formally involved in the justice system, are less likely to reoffend and suffer additional trauma and are more likely to complete an education program (Center for Health and Justice at TASC 2013).

Young adults (16-24 y.o.)



10%

of U.S. population



29%

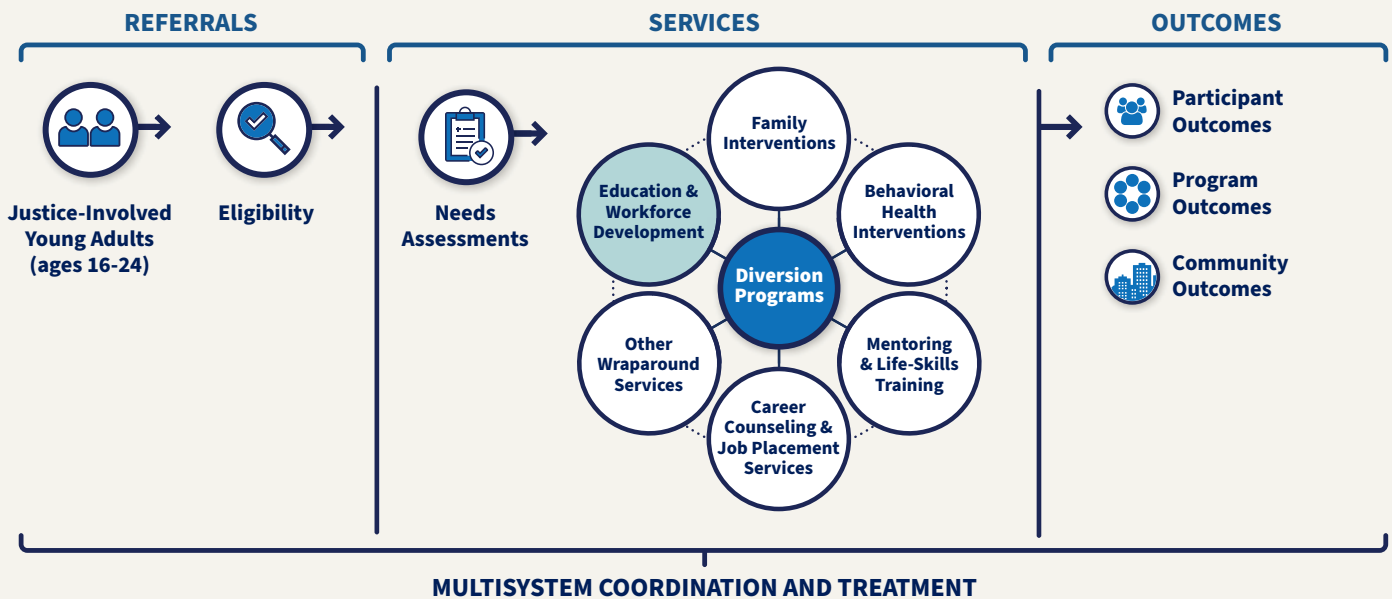
of all arrests

The Approach

To strengthen and expand diversion programs, the U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice funded a three-year technical assistance initiative to help 16 state and local partnerships provide their justice-involved young adult populations with alternatives to prosecution and incarceration, including special education, career and technical education (CTE), and other workforce development opportunities (see Appendix A for overviews for each of these topics). Although diversion programs are becoming more common, only some require participants to receive high-quality education and training services. These services, however, are critical to ensuring that justice-involved young adults have the necessary skills to find living-wage employment and avoid further contact with the criminal justice system.

As illustrated in **Exhibit 1**, education and workforce development is one of several services the initiative envisioned for these individuals. The Young Adult Diversion Framework, which was developed based on a review of the literature (see Appendix B for the research brief) and the experiences of the participating partnerships, illustrates the three stages of diversion programs—referrals, services, and outcomes—and the multisystem coordination and treatment that are the foundation of this work.

EXHIBIT 1. YOUNG ADULT DIVERSION FRAMEWORK



Who

Diversion programs are often supported by multiple organizations, including education, workforce development, justice, and social service agencies.



What

Partners should leverage resources, ensure frontline staff are trained on the unique needs of young adults, and use data for program improvement.



How

Partners should establish partnership and data-sharing agreements; participant referral, intake, and case management protocols; and other supportive policies and practices.

The **referrals** stage of the framework shows the target population, which is justice-involved young adults who have been arrested but not yet adjudicated. Young adults on parole or probation who are at risk of becoming involved in the adult corrections system may also be referred to diversion programs. Eligibility for referrals is typically determined at the law enforcement phase, pretrial/prosecution phase, or specialty court phase using such eligibility criteria as age, lack of prior convictions, and offense/charge, along with validated tools that measure an individual's risk to reoffend.

The **services** stage of the framework illustrates the services young adults may receive as part of the terms of their diversion program. Programmatic decisions are made using validated assessments that measure a participant's need for one or more of the following services:

- *Education and Workforce Development:* Includes special education, CTE, and other workforce development programs. This service is highlighted in the framework because it was the primary focus of the Young Adult Diversion Technical Assistance initiative.
- *Family Interventions:* Includes family counseling, multisystemic therapy, functional family therapy, and other family-based interventions.
- *Behavioral Health Interventions:* Includes substance abuse and mental health interventions, such as detox services, individual psychotherapy and counseling, and anger management.
- *Mentoring and Life Skills Training:* Includes services that connect youth with peers or caring adults to provide positive support and programs that teach personal and interpersonal skills.
- *Career Counseling and Job Placement Services:* Includes services that prepare participants for employment and help them find jobs.
- *Other Wraparound Services:* Includes transportation, caregiver services, Medicaid assistance, aftercare planning, housing, legal advocacy, and other supports.

The **outcomes** stage of the framework shows how this approach can benefit not just the participants, but also the diversion program and community. Possible outcomes for the participants include credential attainment, living-wage employment, family and community reengagement, improved access to behavioral health services, and diversion program completion and exit from the justice system. Program outcomes include a streamlined, multisystem approach to diversion; program persistence and completion; and reduction in criminal behavior. And community outcomes include reduced system costs, safer communities, a skilled workforce, and improved quality of life in neighborhoods disproportionately impacted by crime and incarceration.

The foundation of the framework is the **multisystem coordination and treatment** supported by such organizations as education, workforce development, justice, and social service agencies. Their work together is typically guided by partnership and data-sharing agreements and participant referral, intake, and case-management protocols. These and other supportive policies and practices allow partners to leverage resources, ensure front-line staff are trained on the unique needs of young adults, track participants, and collect and use data for program improvement.

In addition to the framework, the initiative developed a resource collection and Partnership Roadmap tool (**Exhibit 2**) that are housed on the initiative’s website (<https://cte.ed.gov/yadiversion/roadmap/>). Partnerships also were assigned technical assistance coaches and engaged in a range of virtual and in-person peer-to-peer learning activities.

EXHIBIT 2. PARTNERSHIP ROADMAP

The Partnership Roadmap tool supports partnerships as they develop, strengthen, and sustain their community collaborations. It includes five conditions for a successful partnership: common agenda, mutually reinforcing activities, shared measurement, continuous communication, and backbone support. These conditions are based on the Collective Impact framework developed by FSG (Hanleybrown, Kania, and Kramer 2012). For the purposes of the Young Adult Diversion Technical Assistance initiative, funding was added as a sixth condition. See the initiative’s website for more details (<https://cte.ed.gov/yadiversion/roadmap/>).



Partnerships: Successes, Challenges, and Lessons Learned

To qualify for the technical assistance initiative, partnerships were required to include representatives from education, workforce development, justice, and social services organizations. **Exhibit 3** lists the 16 partnerships that were selected, the lead agency for each partnership, and their primary objective for participating. These partnerships were diverse in size, location, and focus. Four of the partnerships were at the state level and 12 were at the local level. Some included just a few active partners, whereas others included representatives from 10 or more organizations. The partnerships represented 12 states—Alabama, California, Florida, Massachusetts, Michigan, Mississippi, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Utah. They also represented a range of objectives: Some focused on developing structures and processes to support their partnerships, whereas others planned to create or expand a program or service. Full profiles of the partnerships are in Appendix C.

EXHIBIT 3. YOUNG ADULT DIVERSION PARTNERSHIPS

Partnership	Lead Agency	Primary Objective
Alameda County, California	Restoring Our Communities at Laney College	Develop and scale records relief program, in collaboration with the Office of the Alameda County Public Defender, to help expunge or seal certain types of records.
Florida	Florida Department of Juvenile Justice	Create an after-school program for at-risk youth that provides preemployment transition services and hands-on, credit-bearing training in coding.
Hampden County, Massachusetts	Springfield District Probation Court	Build support for and establish a special young adult court.
Hattiesburg, Mississippi	Pine Belt Mental Health Resources	Build a diversion team to increase services and access for transition-age youth with severe emotional disorders.
Kent County, Michigan	Lighthouse Academy	Develop an operational structure, policies, and tailored services to address the specific needs of young adults as they transition between programs inside and outside of the academy.
Kentucky	Kentucky Skills U & the Kentucky Department of Juvenile Justice	Increase information and data sharing across partner agencies to create a “warm handoff” for at-risk young adults and youth.
Los Angeles County, California	California State University, Los Angeles	Improve education and workforce outcomes for young adults by strengthening the transition process between correctional camps and services in the community.

Partnership	Lead Agency	Primary Objective
New York State	New York State Developmental Disabilities Planning Council and the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services	Establish an interdisciplinary team to develop a plan for improving system responsiveness to youth and young adults with disabilities.
Ocean County, New Jersey	Ocean County College	Establish a programming hub to match young adults to career training, special education, college and work readiness, internships, positive youth development, mental health services, and other wraparound support services.
Orange County, California	Orange County Development Board	Create better connections among county programs, particularly CTE and special education programs, and fill gaps in services.
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	Philadelphia District Attorney's Office	Improve health, social, and economic outcomes for Philadelphia Treatment Court participants, who are 18–24 years old, by strengthening workforce development services and creating a formal referral system.
Portland, Oregon	Portland Opportunities Industrialization Center and Rosemary Anderson High School	Improve workforce development and special education services offered by the partnership through staff trainings and developing stronger relationships with employers.
Reno, Nevada	Truckee Meadows Community College	Secure new funding resources to develop a centralized system for case management and data sharing, and expand workforce development services to justice-involved young adults.
Somerset County, New Jersey*	New Jersey Department of Education, Office of Career Readiness	Provide career-readiness support to justice-involved young adults and increase the use of evidence-based career-related interventions in schools.
Tuscaloosa, Alabama	Alabama Disabilities Advocacy Program at the University of Alabama	Develop a resource directory to improve coordination among different diversion programs and services for young adults.
Utah*	Utah Division of Juvenile Justice Services	Develop an approach to collaborating and sharing information to support state efforts to serve the diversion-related needs of youth and families.

*The Somerset County, New Jersey and Utah partnerships withdrew from the initiative because of staff changes.

A major focus of the technical assistance initiative was developing and strengthening the partnerships' infrastructure. Recognizing that the unique needs of justice-involved young adults cannot be addressed by a single organization, the partnerships worked to coalesce around a common goal despite their different organizational cultures, purposes, and target populations. Partnership activities ranged from establishing formal partnership agreements to creating resource directories and flowcharts to improve referrals among partner organizations. For example, the Kent County, Michigan partnership developed formal agreements with local justice agencies that resulted in increased enrollment and engagement of justice-involved young adults in the county's education and training programs. The Hattiesburg, Mississippi, partnership developed a process to improve referrals across multiple agencies and a

pandemic-specific resource directory for justice-involved young adults. Similarly, the Tuscaloosa, Alabama, partnership created a resource directory app to support young adults with finding local and statewide mental health, workforce development, housing, substance abuse, and residential treatment services.

The partnerships also had to address common collaboration challenges like staff turnover among lead and partner organizations. When this occurred, the partnerships lost momentum and had to devote time and effort to familiarize new staff with the initiative and gain their buy-in. Several of the lead partnership organizations also reported that it was difficult to keep their partners engaged given that this work was not funded and was an add-on to their regular responsibilities.

Another critical focus of the technical assistance initiative was helping the partnerships develop and strengthen the programs and services provided to their justice-involved young adults. This work included developing the partnerships' understanding of special education, CTE, and career pathways (see Appendix A for brief overviews of each topic). The partnerships also had the opportunity to learn from other organizations that work with similar populations. The Hampden County, Massachusetts partnership, for example, conducted a site visit to the Young Adult Court in San Francisco to understand the court's policies and procedures and see firsthand how the court was run. Information gathered from this trip was used by the Hampden County partnership to build support for and establish a special young adult court in its jurisdiction. All of the partnerships learned about the importance of applying a user-centered design approach to developing services for justice-involved young adults, which involves soliciting feedback from participants during program design and implementation to ensure that services align to their needs and interests. The partnerships also learned about case-management best practices, different evidence-based approaches for working with young adults (e.g., motivational interviewing and trauma-informed/healing-informed approaches), and different funding strategies to support their work, including ability to benefit (ATB), pay for success, and justice reinvestment (**Exhibit 4**).

EXHIBIT 4. FUNDING STRATEGIES

The **ATB** provision in the Higher Education Act allows low-skilled individuals without a high school credential to qualify for federal financial aid to pay for workforce training and education that are part of an eligible career pathway (Walizer and Mortrude 2016).

Pay for Success is an outcomes-based funding approach that ties private investment in service delivery to measurable progress and outcomes (U.S. Department of Education 2017).

Justice Reinvestment is a process used by states to implement policies that reduce corrections costs and reinvest those saving in criminal justice and community programs (Lawrence 2017).

Several of the partnerships focused on developing their capacity to collect, share, and use data. This work included addressing differences in their data systems, definitions, and metrics, which make tracking justice-involved young adults across systems difficult. For example, the New York partnership discovered that partner organizations use different definitions for intellectual disabilities and, therefore, had to identify a common definition that all partners could support.

Some of the partnerships were able to collect data during the initiative to inform their work. The Alameda, California, partnership, for example, surveyed participants in its records relief program—a program that helps expunge or seal certain types of records—to better understand their needs and barriers. Survey findings were used to promote the program to other eligible students and partner organizations, develop strategies for expanding the program, and secure additional funding. The Los Angeles County, California, partnership set up a system to track and collect data on outcomes for young adults after they leave county juvenile camps and used this information to develop an automated referral system and address gaps in their services.

Funding was also a key consideration for the partnerships. During the initiative, some partnerships worked to find new funding sources to support their work with justice-involved young adults. For example, the Reno, Nevada, partnership secured state funding to expand its work to include another community college and a juvenile detention facility. Many of the partnerships, however, indicated that the lack of funding was a challenge. For example, although the Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, partnership was initially able to hire a vocational education coordinator to integrate training and workforce development services for treatment court participants, the partnership later lost funding for this position and is now looking for new ways to provide these services.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the partnerships' experiences and a review of the literature, the Young Adult Diversion Technical Assistance initiative identified the following key elements for strengthening the education and workforce development opportunities for justice-involved young adults:

- Use a multisystems approach to address the full range of young adults' needs and maximize funding.
- Engage employers to align programs with the local labor market and create viable pathways to employment.
- Develop robust recruitment, intake, and service-matching protocols.
- Develop quality assurance protocols and collect and use data to evaluate progress and drive program improvement.

The initiative also outlined an agenda for future research (see the research brief in Appendix B for more details) on risk-and-needs assessments for young adults, what works to improve outcomes for young adults, and the success of workforce development and diversion programs for justice-involved populations. This research is needed to improve outcomes and ensure that the unique needs of justice-involved young adults are addressed. In the interim, this initiative presents the field with an approach—the Young Adult Diversion Framework—to provide justice-involved young adults with viable alternatives to prosecution and incarceration and ensure that they have the necessary skills to find living-wage employment and avoid further contact with the criminal justice system.

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Appendix A.

Content Overviews

Opportunities for Justice-Involved Young Adults: **Special Education**

Special education programs under Part B of the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*¹, or if applicable, Section 504 of the *Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (Rehabilitation Act)*, are designed to provide a free appropriate public education (FAPE) that meets the unique needs of eligible students with disabilities.² These programs are generally provided to eligible students in public schools, including charter schools and juvenile or adult correctional facilities.³ For justice-involved students, who are more likely than students in the general population to have education-related disabilities (Quinn et al. 2005), special education programs may provide a path toward greater independence and education and career opportunities.

How does it work?

The *IDEA* is a federal law that provides federal funds to states, and through them to eligible local educational agencies, to assist in providing FAPE to children with disabilities in the least restrictive environment. FAPE includes the provision of special education and related services at no cost to parents, in conformity with an individualized education program (IEP). States and school districts must locate, identify, and evaluate children who have disabilities and who need special education and related services because of a disability. Once a student is determined eligible for special education and related services, an IEP must be developed for the student.

Each student's IEP is a written statement that documents the student's special education program that is developed at a meeting of the IEP team convened by school officials.⁴ IEPs include, among other information, annual measurable academic and functional goals and the special education and related services designed to address the student's disability-related needs and to enable the student to access the general education curriculum, i.e., the same curriculum as for nondisabled students. Special education includes specially designed instruction to meet the unique needs of a child with a disability, and related services include transportation and other support services designed to assist the child to benefit from special education. Examples of related services include physical

¹ *IDEA* includes 13 categories of disability: specific learning disability, other health impairment, autism, emotional disturbance, speech or language impairment, visual impairment (including blindness), deafness, hearing impairment, deaf-blindness, orthopedic impairment, intellectual disability, traumatic brain injury, and multiple disabilities. 34 C.F.R. § 300.8 (defining child with a disability).

² If a public school program cannot provide a student with the special education and related services that the student needs to receive FAPE, the state or school district could place the student in a private school at public expense for the student to receive the needed services.

³ *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act*, as amended in 2015 through the Every Student Succeed Act (Public Law 114-95). <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-114publ95/pdf/PLAW-114publ95.pdf>.

⁴ The IEP team includes one or both of the child's parents; at least one of the child's regular education teachers; if the child is, or may be participating in the regular educational environment, at least one special education teacher or provider of the child; a representative of the public agency who is qualified to provide, or supervise the provision of, specially designed instruction, and is knowledgeable about the general education curriculum and agency resources; the child, if appropriate; and other individuals at the discretion of the parents or public agency.

and occupational therapy, speech-language pathology services, psychological services, counseling services, including rehabilitation counseling, school health services, and social work services in schools⁵. For example, an IEP could include specialized classroom seating, specialized equipment, extended time for instruction or tests, and secondary transition services to facilitate the student's movement from school to post-school activities. (Center for Parent Information and Resources 2017).

This last category of services is a crucial component for students who are preparing to leave secondary education. Beginning at age 16, or younger if determined appropriate by the IEP team, and updated annually thereafter, each student's IEP must include appropriate measurable postsecondary goals based upon age-appropriate transition assessments related to training, education, employment, and where appropriate independent living skills, and the transition services (including courses of study) needed to assist the student in reaching those goals. Transition services may include the following (Indiana Secondary Transition Resource Center 2011):

- **additional instruction** (e.g., SAT® preparation, tutoring, personal finance courses, career orientation courses);
- **related accommodations** (e.g., assistive technology evaluation, extra time for test taking, or modifying a vehicle);
- **community experiences** (e.g., practice shopping, voting, use of community recreation centers, using the postal service);
- **supported employment** (e.g., internships or apprenticeships, use of employment agencies, application to vocational rehabilitation services); and
- **support in acquiring daily living skills** (e.g., cooking classes, time/schedule management, communication of personal information when appropriate).

Students play an active role in transition planning, along with parents, educators, and vocational rehabilitation specialists. Transition planning includes assessments and activities to identify and document students' interests; vocational aptitudes; learning styles; and skills, including academic, work readiness, independent living, and psychological and cognitive. Additional supports for students with disabilities and at-risk youth are described in **Exhibit A1**.

Why special education?

Youth who are involved in the justice system are more likely to have education-related disabilities than those in the general population. Three to four times as many require special education services. Students with disabilities in correctional facilities most commonly experience specific learning disabilities and emotional/behavioral disorders, and youth who are living with emotional/behavioral disorders are twice as likely to live in a correctional facility, transitional housing, or drug treatment center or to experience homelessness after leaving school (Quinn et al. 2005). Appropriate support and services (including transition planning and transition services) to help students with disabilities succeed in education programs are their right under law, and identifying students eligible for these services is crucially important in helping them toward further education and employment (**Exhibit A2**).

⁵ IDEA requirements for IEPs are at 34 C.F.R. §§ 300.320-300.324. The definition of special education is at 34 C.F.R. § 300.39, and the definition of related services is at 34 C.F.R. § 300.34.

EXHIBIT A1. ADDITIONAL SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AND AT-RISK YOUTH

The U.S. Department of Education (ED) provides additional support to students with disabilities, beyond *IDEA*, through several related laws:

- Title I, Part D of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965*, as amended by the *Every Student Succeeds Act*, provides supplementary funding to support education for learners in state-operated institutions and day programs and school districts with high numbers or percentages of children and youth residing in locally operated correctional facilities.
- The *Rehabilitation Act* requires schools receiving federal funding to provide regular or special education and related aids and services that meet the education needs of students with disabilities as adequately as they do for students without disabilities in the regular educational environment unless the student cannot be educated satisfactorily in the regular environment with the use of supplementary aids and services.
- The *Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V)* requires that state education agencies describe how they will work to improve educational and employment outcomes for students with disabilities in their state applications, which must be approved to receive Perkins V career and technical education (CTE) funding.
- The *Rehabilitation Act*, as amended by the *Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)*, requires states to dedicate at least 15 percent of their federal vocational rehabilitation (VR) grant funds to provide preemployment transition services to students with disabilities. These services include career and college counseling, work-based learning experiences, workplace-readiness training to develop social skills and independent living, and instruction in self-advocacy.

EXHIBIT A2. SPOTLIGHT: IDENTIFYING ELIGIBLE STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The lack of a shared definition of “youth with developmental or intellectual disabilities” challenged the efforts of agencies working with justice-involved youth in New York State to identify and provide special education services to eligible students.

In collaboration with four state agencies, the Developmental Disabilities Planning Council developed a checklist to identify students involved in the justice system who are eligible (or may be eligible) for special education services. Checklist items include whether a student has been identified as having a disability or is suspected to have a disability under *IDEA*.

Where to go for more information

ED, Office of Special Education Programs

The Office of Special Education Programs at ED administers federal funding for special education in the United States and provides related resources and information.

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/osers/osep/index.html>

ED, Office for Civil Rights

The Office for Civil Rights enforces and provides information about federal civil rights laws that protect students from race, color, national origin, sex, disability, and age discrimination in ED-funded programs or activities.

<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ocr/index.html>

Literacy Information and Communication System (LINCS) Community

The ED-funded LINCS Community is a network of adult education providers offering resources on a broad range of subjects related to career, technical, and adult education. The community includes a group dedicated to serving learners with disabilities.

<https://community.lincs.ed.gov/group/disabilities-and-equitable-outcomes>

Perkins Collaborative Resources Network (PCRN)

ED developed the PCRN to share information on national legislation, grant programs, initiatives, current funding opportunities, and convenings and conferences related to CTE. The Supporting Student Success in CTE page offers resources to promote access to CTE programs for students with disabilities.

<https://cte.ed.gov/initiatives/supporting-student-success-in-cte>

National Center for Learning Disabilities

The National Center for Learning Disabilities is a research and advocacy organization that provides special education resources to assist educators, policymakers, parents, and students understand learning and attention issues.

<https://www.nclld.org/>

Center on Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports

The Center on Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support is an ED-funded technical assistance center that provides resources and information to help educators implement systems to support students with or at risk for disabilities, including those involved with the juvenile justice system.

<https://www.pbis.org/topics/juvenile-justice>

National Technical Assistance Center on Transition: The Collaborative

The Collaborative provides technical assistance and a collection of resources to stakeholders involved in supporting students with disabilities' transition from education to college and the workforce.

<https://transitionta.org/>

How to connect

ED provides contact information for state agencies that manage K–12 education, higher education, special education, and adult education in each state. For more information, see <https://www2.ed.gov/about/contacts/state/index.html>.

The Center on Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports provides a list of contacts for all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands: <https://www.pbis.org/about/pbis-state-coordinators>.

References

- Center for Parent Information and Resources. 2017. “Supplementary Aids and Services (Component of the IEP): Examples from the Field.” <https://www.parentcenterhub.org/iep-supplementary/#examples>.
- Indiana Secondary Transition Resource Center. 2011. *Transition Assessment Resource Guide*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana Secondary Transition Resource Center at the Center on Community Living and Careers, Indiana Institute on Disability and Community, Indiana University. <https://instrc.indiana.edu/HTML5TrainingsArchive/TransitionAssessment/Transassess1/1%20Transition%20Assessment%20Guide%20-%20Fundamentals,%20Framework,%20Timelines,%20References.pdf>
- Quinn, Mary M., Robert B. Rutherford, Peter E. Leone, David M. Osher, and Jeffrey M. Poirier. 2005. “Youth with Disabilities in Juvenile Corrections: A National Survey.” *Council for Exceptional Children* 71 (3): 339–45.

Opportunities for Justice-Involved Young Adults: Career and Technical Education

Career and technical education (CTE) programs are designed to prepare individuals of all ages for a profession. They combine academic instruction with technical training relevant to an industry or specific occupation. For justice-involved students, CTE may provide a pathway back to education and a rewarding career.

CTE programs are available at the secondary and postsecondary education levels and are supported by state and federal funds (**Exhibit A3**). Secondary providers include comprehensive high schools, career academies, technical high schools, and alternative high schools. Postsecondary providers include public and private community and technical colleges and universities. Secondary and postsecondary CTE programs are also offered in local, state, and federal correctional facilities.

EXHIBIT A3. WHO FUNDS CTE?

In addition to state funding and policies, CTE programming is shaped by the federal *Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act*—also known as *Perkins V*. *Perkins V* provides around \$1.2 billion to support CTE across the country and establishes program, reporting, and accountability requirements for approved CTE programs. It also allows states to use up to 2 percent of their *Perkins V* funds to support CTE programs in state institutions, such as state correctional facilities, juvenile justice facilities, and educational institutions that serve individuals with disabilities.

How does it work?

CTE programs consist of course sequences that combine academic and technical skill instruction to prepare students for an occupational specialty (e.g., nursing or accounting), starting with introductory coursework and continuing to more advanced and specialized training. These programs will often provide opportunities for “stackable” credentials—sequences of industry-informed credentials that students can accumulate over time to expand their competencies, help them advance within a career pathway, and earn family-sustaining wages. For example, students who enroll in Truckee Meadows Community College’s certificate of achievement in welding commit to a one-year program, which is eligible for federal financial aid. At the end of the year, successful students earn the certificate of achievement, which they may include on their resume, and they may continue on to a two-year, associate degree in welding (**Exhibit A4**).

Increasingly, secondary CTE programs are also linked to programs in a related field at the postsecondary level (**Exhibit A5**), providing a clear pathway for students to pursue further training. Postsecondary CTE programs range from certificate programs lasting from a few months to over a year, to two- and four-year degree programs, to graduate education. Some postsecondary education programs also offer students who have not earned a high school diploma the opportunity to earn that credential while they do their college coursework.

EXHIBIT A4. SPOTLIGHT: STACKABLE CREDENTIALS

Truckee Meadows Community College in Reno, Nevada offers a sequence of credentials leading up to an Associate of Arts in welding. Students enrolled in the one-year [certificate of achievement](#) program are eligible for federal financial aid and, upon completion, are halfway to an associate degree.

Program	Skills certificate	Certificate of Achievement	Associate's degree
Welding 211	✓	✓	✓
Welding 212	✓	✓	✓
Welding 221	✓	✓	✓
Welding 222	✓	✓	✓
Communications		✓	✓
OSHA		✓	✓
Print Reading		✓	✓
Quality Control		✓	✓
Elective (2x)		✓	✓
English			✓
Humanities			✓
U.S. Constitution			✓
Information Systems			✓
Science			✓
Elective			✓
Welding 231			✓
Welding 232			✓
Welding 241			✓
Welding 242			✓

For more information on stackable credentials, visit <https://cte.ed.gov/initiatives/community-college-stackable-credentials>.

EXHIBIT A5. FIELDS OF STUDY

CTE can provide students with career opportunities in a wide range of fields, including the following:

- Agriculture, Food, and Natural Resources
- Architecture and Construction
- Arts, A/V Technology, and Communications
- Business Management and Administration
- Education and Training
- Finance
- Government and Public Administration
- Health Science
- Hospitality and Tourism
- Human Services
- Information Technology
- Law, Public Safety, Corrections, and Security
- Manufacturing
- Marketing
- Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
- Transportation, Distribution, and Logistics

Why CTE?

CTE benefits students by linking the skills they learn in school to tangible employment outcomes and providing an answer to the familiar question, “Why do I need to know this?” Research has found positive effects for CTE programs on the likelihood of students earning a high school diploma and on their post-program earnings, particularly in such high-demand fields as health care and advanced manufacturing (Dougherty 2018; Belfield and Bailey 2017).

Many justice-involved young adults struggle academically and have a history of being suspended or expelled from school. As a result, they may lack education credentials that would open the door to additional training and education or employment opportunities. For these students, CTE’s combination of industry-aligned technical skills and options to earn college credit may provide a better focused and more engaging path to well-paid employment and further education than college preparatory programs.

Where to go for more information

AdvanceCTE

A membership organization for state CTE leaders, AdvanceCTE provides general and state-specific information on CTE (e.g., career clusters, programs of study, and state profiles) on its website, which includes a resource center and fact sheets.

<https://careertech.org/>

CareerOneStop

This U.S. Department of Labor’s career, training, and job search website is designed for job seekers, employers, students, and career advisors.

<https://www.careeronestop.org/>

Association for Career and Technical Education (ACTE)

A membership organization for CTE professionals, ACTE provides background information on CTE (e.g., CTE fundamentals, state profiles, and economic impact) and shares emerging state CTE policies on their website.

<https://www.acteonline.org/>

Perkins Collaborative Resources Network (PCRN)

ED developed the PCRN to share information on national CTE legislation, grant programs, initiatives, current funding opportunities, and convenings and conferences.

<https://cte.ed.gov>

How to connect

ED's PCRN maintains a list of CTE directors in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Palau, and Puerto Rico. These directors can provide additional information on CTE program offerings, providers, and initiatives in each state. You can find their contact information at <https://cte.ed.gov/profiles/national-summary>.

The U.S. Department of Labor maintains an online directory of American Job Centers that connect people to training and other workforce services. To find your local center, go to <https://www.careeronestop.org/LocalHelp/AmericanJobCenters/find-american-job-centers.aspx>.

References

Belfield, Clive, and Thomas Bailey. 2017. "The Labor Market Returns to Sub-Baccalaureate College: A Review." CAPSEE Working Paper. New York: Center for Analysis of Postsecondary Education and Employment. <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/media/k2/attachments/labor-market-returns-sub-baccalaureate-college-review.pdf>.

Dougherty, Shaun M. 2018. "The Effect of Career and Technical Education on Human Capital Accumulation: Causal Evidence from Massachusetts." *Education Finance and Policy* 13 (2): 119–48.

Opportunities for Justice-Involved Young Adults: Career Pathways

Career pathways prepare participants to advance in their careers and pursue further education by providing a clear sequence of education courses and credentials aligned to the needs of high-demand industries. For at-risk young adults, including those involved with the justice system, career pathways may be an avenue to a rewarding career and full participation in society. Funding sources for career pathways are described in **Exhibit A6**.

Pathway programs offer secondary, postsecondary, and adult basic education instruction with wraparound support services, such as academic and career advising. Because they span multiple educational levels and education and workforce systems, pathways require coordination among education providers, workforce development agencies, and employers (**Exhibit A7**).

The Department of Labor outlines six key elements of career pathways:

- 1 Cross-agency partnerships
- 2 Sector or industry focus and employer engagement
- 3 Education and training programs
- 4 Braided funding (see text box)
- 5 Aligned policies and programs
- 6 Processes for measuring system change and performance

EXHIBIT A6. WHO FUNDS CAREER PATHWAYS?

Funds for career pathways come from a variety of public and private sources. Federal funding for career pathways is primarily governed by two laws: *Perkins V* and *WIOA*. Federal Perkins and *WIOA* funds can be “braided” with state funding or grants and investments from private foundations or businesses to support career pathway activities.

EXHIBIT A7. SPOTLIGHT: CROSS-AGENCY PARTNERSHIPS

Boston, Massachusetts is home to a large community of agencies and organizations serving young adults who have become disconnected from their education and career development. Recognizing the need to coordinate the work of these organizations to facilitate the transition of young adults from secondary education to careers, the [Boston Opportunity Agenda](#) and

[Boston Private Industry Council](#) organized a group of stakeholders involved in the Boston Opportunity Youth Collaborative to design career pathways and systems of support for those pathways. Its work both addressed and highlighted challenges that disconnected young adults face in exploring their career interests, identifying career pathways aligned with their interests, accessing career-oriented training programs, and persisting in and completing college programs. It also underscored the need for greater coordination among organizations serving those young adults; improved outreach, assessment, and referral strategies; and a focus on building social-emotional competencies and connections to social and health supports.

For more detail on the work of the collaborative in building career pathways for young adults, as well as recommendations the group developed to tackle these challenges, see [New Directions: Creating Career Pathways for and With Opportunity Youth](#).

How do they work?

A pathway begins with an exploration of career opportunities that align with participants’ skills, interests, knowledge and experience, and creation of a career plan that identifies relevant education and training. Once they have started on a pathway, participants receive academic, technical, and employability skill instruction, with the goal of improving their knowledge and skills to secure living-wage employment aligned to their training and with career advancement opportunities (**Exhibit A8**).

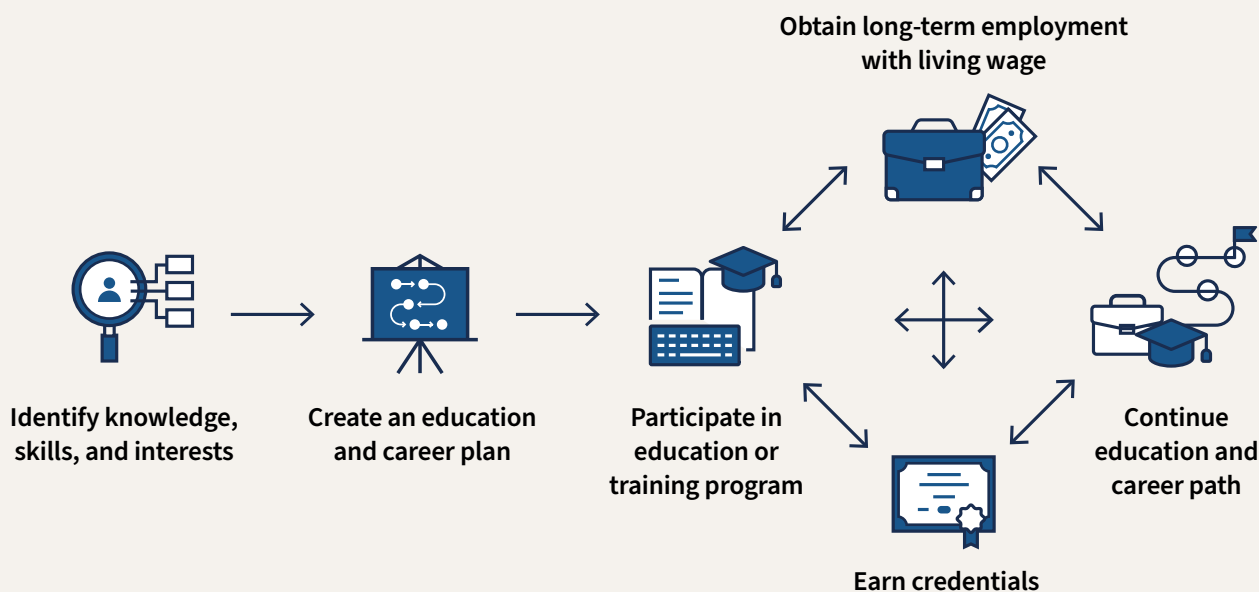
Participants may work or participate in work-based learning experiences while enrolled in a pathway program. Their career pathway may not be linear, as pathways offer multiple entry and exits points for individuals to pursue more education or stop out for employment on an ongoing basis.

Why career pathways?

Many justice-involved young adults struggle academically and have a history of being suspended or expelled from school. Their low levels of education attainment can have long-term labor market consequences. Career pathways offer an efficient and student-centered approach to training and education by connecting justice-involved young adults with career, technical, and adult basic education, postsecondary education, career and academic advising, and supportive services needed to prepare for, obtain, and progress in a career. Their alignment with specific careers helps participants to see the relevance of career pathways to their personal goals. Studies on career pathways have shown that integrated academic-technical skill instruction and work-based learning experiences—key pathway components—increase participant attainment of college-awarded credentials and post-education earnings (Anderson et al. 2017; Jobs for the Future 2019).

EXHIBIT A8. HOW DO CAREER PATHWAYS WORK?

Adapted from [Reentry Education Student Flow Chart](#)



Where to go for more information

JOB SEEKERS/STUDENTS

CareerOneStop

This U.S. Department of Labor’s career, training, and job search website is designed for job seekers, employers, students, and career advisors.

<https://www.careeronestop.org/>

Get My Future

The CareerOneStop website includes a tool that provides information and resources for different stages of an individual’s college and career path.

<https://www.careeronestop.org/GetMyFuture/default.aspx>

O*Net OnLine

O*Net provides career exploration resources for job seekers, featuring a database with details on nearly a thousand occupations, including descriptions of typical job tasks; required knowledge, skills, and abilities; relevant credentials; and wages.

<https://www.onetonline.org/>

SERVICE PROVIDERS

Perkins Collaborative Resources Network (PCRN)

ED developed the PCRN to share information on national CTE legislation, grant programs, initiatives, current funding opportunities, and convenings and conferences. The site includes information and resources about career pathways.

<https://cte.ed.gov/initiatives/career-pathways-systems>

The Literacy Information and Communication System (LINCS) Community

The ED-funded LINCS Community is a network of adult education providers, featuring resources on a broad range of subjects related to career, technical, and adult education. LINCS includes a community of practice on career pathways (free account required to access content).

<https://community.lincs.ed.gov/group/career-pathways>

Youth.gov

A collaborative effort of over 20 government agencies and offices, Youth.gov features a collection of resources to assist in career exploration and skill development for youth.

<https://youth.gov/youth-topics/youth-employment/career-exploration-and-skill-development>

How to connect

American Job Centers

The U.S. Department of Labor maintains an online directory of American Job Centers that connect people to training and other workforce services. To find your local center, go to <https://www.careeronestop.org/LocalHelp/AmericanJobCenters/find-american-job-centers.aspx>.

PCRN

The PCRN maintains a list of CTE directors in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Palau, and Puerto Rico. These directors can provide additional information on CTE program offerings, providers, and initiatives in each state or advise you on career pathways opportunities. You can find their contact information at <https://cte.ed.gov/profiles/national-summary>.

National Association of State Directors of Adult Education

The National Association of State Directors of Adult Education provides contact information for agencies providing adult education programs in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, American Samoa, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. <http://nasdae.org/state-ae-directory/>

References

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- Jobs for the Future. “TAACCCT Case Study Series: From Programs to System Change.” 2019. <https://www.jff.org/resources/case-study-series-taacctt-programs-system-change/>.

Appendix B.

Research Brief: Diversion Programs for Justice-Involved Young Adults

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Introduction

Juvenile and criminal justice systems work with individuals who have a complex array of needs, but perhaps no population poses greater challenges for law enforcement, courts, and probation and corrections agencies than young adults. Compared to other demographic groups, young adults are disproportionately more likely to be arrested and, once under system supervision, are the most likely to reoffend (Carson and Golinelli 2014; U.S. Department of Justice et al. 2014). Recent advances in cognitive brain development research have helped policymakers and practitioners understand that young adults are a distinct population with unique characteristics and needs (National Research Council 2013). As a result, states and jurisdictions have started to adopt policies and practices that are more developmentally appropriate and tailored to this age group.

A necessary part of this developmentally appropriate approach is not only treating young adults differently than both youth and adults, but also not treating all young adults in the same way. Research has shown that justice systems can get the most impact by providing intensive supervision and services to individuals who have the highest risk of reoffending while diverting those who pose less of a risk to public safety from formal system involvement (Seigle, Walsh, and Weber 2014). Some jurisdictions have taken steps to reform their approaches to supervising and serving young adults, but formalized, system-wide diversion initiatives—which redirect individuals from prosecution and/or incarceration to community-based programming, supervision, and supports—are still uncommon. It is critical, now more than ever, that states and counties use limited resources as efficiently as possible to protect public safety while also still supporting young adults to make a successful transition to adulthood and targeting their unique needs.

To support this goal, this research brief provides policymakers, juvenile and adult criminal justice system leaders, and education and workforce development providers with an overview of the needs of the young adult population. It describes the evidence for how diversion initiatives can provide viable alternative pathways to formal justice involvement, and the need for such initiatives to incorporate a focus on education and employment and reflect the key elements of successful programming.

This research brief will do the following:

- Define the characteristics and needs of justice-involved young adults.
- Describe how diversion from court involvement and the provision of key education and workforce development services can improve outcomes for young adults.
- Identify key challenges to developing successful diversion and workforce development programs and provide examples of promising practices.
- Provide a checklist of key considerations in the creation and implementation of programs that are designed to target young adults.
- Propose a future research agenda to answer key questions on the impacts of tools and services on the young adult population.

The Justice-Involved Young Adult Population

Who are justice-involved young adults and how are they distinct from both youth and adults?

A range of terms are often used to describe the young adult population, including emerging adults or transition-age youth. In general, justice systems define young adults as individuals between the ages of 16 and 24. However, regardless of the specific age range or term used, young adults can come into contact with the juvenile or adult justice systems, and sometimes both.¹ Currently, in almost all states, any person who commits a crime after age 18 is referred to the adult criminal justice system. At the same time, when a young person is adjudicated in the juvenile justice system, two-thirds of states allow them to remain under the supervision of the juvenile system through age 20 and, in some states, up to age 24 (Zang 2017). As a result, references to the “justice system” in this brief include both the juvenile and adult criminal justice systems.

Research on cognitive brain development has shown that the human brain is still maturing into the mid-20s, generally finishing development around age 26 (National Research Council 2013). As a result, young adults are unique and distinct from youth and adults; they are more likely to push boundaries, lack impulse control, are more susceptible to peer influence, and do not consider the long-term consequences of their actions (Mulvey 2011). Additionally, the areas of the brain that are the last to develop are directly linked to criminogenic behavior (Johnson, Blum, and Giedd 2009). It is no surprise then that young adults represent a disproportionately high percentage of the criminal justice population (Justice Policy Institute 2016). According to an analysis of 2012 data, young adults made up 10 percent of the American population but accounted for 29 percent of all arrests (Perker and Chester 2017). Young adults are also disproportionately represented among those committing violent crimes; in 2016, 40 percent of homicide and robbery arrests were young adults (Justice Policy Institute 2016). Additionally, young adults of color are disproportionately involved in the justice system.² Black males ages 18 to 24 made up nearly 40 percent of all young adults admitted to adult state and federal prisons in 2012 and represented nearly 10 percent of all prison admissions that year. Compared to white individuals the same age, black males ages 18 and 19 were nearly 13 times as likely to be incarcerated, and those ages 20 to 24 were eight times as likely to be incarcerated (U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, 2020). Unfortunately, disproportionate minority involvement in the justice system is prevalent among females as well, as black females are nearly three times as likely as their white peers to be referred to juvenile court (U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention 2016).

¹ Given that young adults are represented in both juvenile and adult justice systems, statistics throughout this brief will draw from statistics for both populations.

² Communities of color are defined differently by different organizations and publications but generally consist of individuals who identify as African American, Latino/a, Native American, and Asian and Pacific Islander.

What are the needs of justice-involved young adults?

Justice-involved young adults have a range of distinct needs and face multiple challenges that complicate efforts to deliver services and improve outcomes. These needs include the following:

Criminogenic needs

Although young adults are more cognitively developed than youth, they are also more likely to have antisocial attitudes and beliefs, be susceptible to negative peer influences, and engage in risky behavior and substance use, while also attempting to create separation and autonomy from family. It is also important to recognize that young adults are not simply mini-adults. Rather, compared to adults, young adults are more impulsive and likely to push boundaries and less likely to consider potential long-term consequences (Council of State Governments Justice Center 2015). As a result, it is imperative that justice systems treat this population as unique and design interventions that target these specific needs.

Education and workforce development needs

Justice-involved young adults generally have lower education levels than their non-justice-involved peers and a history of previous involvement in their school's disciplinary system, including high rates of suspension and expulsion (Leone and Weinberg 2012). Many justice-involved young adults have an unidentified and/or unmet special education need. Nearly one in three adults in prison and one in four adults in jail has a learning disability (Vallas 2016), and the prevalence of learning disabilities in the juvenile justice system is more than seven times greater than the rate among youth in the general population (Sedlak and McPherson 2010). In addition, young adults in contact with the justice system have significant workforce development needs. They have few if any previous job experiences, lack soft skills, such as interviewing or resume building, and often lack the necessary job-training skills to secure and maintain gainful employment (Rampey et al. 2016).

Behavioral health needs

Young adults have particularly acute mental health treatment needs, as many disorders emerge for the first time during this period of development. Additionally, young adults under justice system supervision are particularly likely to have a substance use disorder (Mumola and Karberg 2006), which has been shown to significantly impair judgment and contribute to long-term offending among all individuals (Schubert and Mulvey 2014; Wilson et al. 2011). Complicating treatment efforts, many individuals in the justice system are dual diagnosed with multiple disorders; for example, half of youth who are diagnosed with a psychiatric disorder are also diagnosed with a co-occurring substance use disorder (Teplin et al. 2006).

Furthermore, exposure to trauma is ubiquitous: In the juvenile justice system, nearly all youth have been exposed to at least one trauma (e.g., violence in their home or community), and 57 percent have been exposed to more than five traumas (Abram et al. 2013). In addition, about one in 10 youth have a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Youth who have experienced trauma and PTSD have an increased risk of mental health issues and drug and alcohol use (Abram et al. 2013).

Independent life skills and transitional support needs

As young adults transition into adulthood and self-sufficiency, they need access to stable housing, opportunities to gain employability and financial literacy skills, access to health care, affordable childcare, transportation, and other independent living supports. For example, research suggests

that one in 10 young adults experiences some form of homelessness over the course of a year (Abram et al. 2013). Additionally, Medicaid eligibility guidelines make it challenging for young adults to access coverage, and they often have their coverage interrupted or terminated upon reaching age 19.³ Yet, while young adults generally “age out” of continued services and supports from youth-serving systems, they are often ineligible to receive services from the adult systems necessary to fill in the gaps (Morton, Dworsky, and Samuels 2017). Confusion often builds around which support system is responsible for helping young adults develop these transitional skills, and there is a general lack of coordination across service systems in states that results in this population falling through the cracks.

Creating Diversion Pathways to Meet the Needs of Young Adults

Young adults who are at high risk of reoffending need supervision and support from the juvenile and/or adult criminal justice system. However, many young adults who come into contact with the justice system do not pose a public safety risk but instead have a complex array of needs that could be addressed more effectively by other service systems. Research demonstrates that system involvement for these lower-risk young adults can actually increase recidivism, while tying up justice system staff and limited resources that are needed to meet the needs of young adults who are higher risk. Thus, states and counties can both increase public safety and use resources more efficiently by establishing multiple entry points along the justice continuum to divert low-risk young adults from justice involvement while connecting them with services.

Studies conducted on diversion programs generally have found that youth and young adults who are diverted, compared to their peers who become formally involved in the justice system, are less likely to reoffend, more likely to complete school, and less likely to suffer from trauma or other behavioral health issues (Center for Health and Justice at TASC 2013). It is important to note, however, that diversion can also result in more young adults being involved in the justice system if jurisdictions do not have clear eligibility criteria – with an increase in the availability of diversion opportunities leading to more young people getting pushed into the justice system as a way of receiving services.

Diversion can occur at multiple key decision points along the justice continuum: before arrest, before filing of a petition or case, or through the court system. At each possible entry point, diversion decisions should be informed by use of a brief, validated risk-screening tool that measures a young person’s risk to reoffend, given that the nature of an individual’s offense generally does not predict the likelihood of reoffending. At the same time, jurisdictions need to use these tools carefully as a way of enhancing rather than replacing professional judgment, particularly for young adults of color, because some risk-screening tools can perpetuate rather than mitigate the disproportionate involvement of people of color at all points across the justice continuum.

Risk-assessment tools should also be supplemented with tools to screen for needs, including mental health, substance use, and trauma screening tools, to assess justice-involved young adults’ potential behavioral health needs. Jurisdictions can also employ education and workforce-readiness

³ The federal government sets minimum guidelines for Medicaid eligibility, but states can choose to expand coverage beyond the minimum threshold.

assessments and career-interest surveys. While not tailored to a justice-involved population, these can provide critical information as to whether education or workforce-focused diversion services are appropriate. Based on the use of these tools, states and counties should prioritize for diversion those young adults who are low to moderate risk to reoffend, and who have service needs that can and should be met outside of the justice system. Young adults who are low risk but have minimal service needs can and should be diverted from system involvement.

For additional diversion resources, see **Exhibit B1**.

Importance and Challenge of Developing Successful Diversion Programs for Young Adults that Incorporate Workforce Development

To meet the complex needs of justice-involved young adults, particularly in times of economic uncertainty, diversion programs targeting this population must include connections to education and workforce development services and viable employment opportunities. Even when the economy overall sustained record low unemployment over the last several years, the unemployment rate among formerly incarcerated people remained over 27 percent—higher than the U.S. unemployment rate during the Great Depression. As of 2013, approximately one in five young adults were not in school or engaged in work (Council of State Governments Justice Center 2015), and data show that recessions disproportionately impact the employment prospects of young adults, particularly those of color, compared to other demographic groups. The consequences of these outcomes are not just individual but societal—according to the Center for Economic and Policy Research, our economy loses approximately \$80 billion annually due to the unemployment and underemployment of those with a criminal record (Schmitt and Warner 2010).

EXHIBIT B1: ADDITIONAL DIVERSION RESOURCES

- The [Models for Change Juvenile Diversion Guidebook](#) is a comprehensive tool that provides a road map and action steps to develop high-quality juvenile diversion programs.
- The National Association of Pretrial Services Agencies has developed a [series of informational resources](#) around diversion, including performance standards, model policies, and research on effectiveness.
- Fair and Just Prosecution compiled a [compendium of best practices](#) and research for prosecutor-led diversion programs.

The benefits of connecting justice-involved young adults with education and workforce development services, both in correctional facilities and in the community, to overcome these challenges are well documented—individuals who participate in education and/or vocational programs while incarcerated are 43 percent less likely to return to prison, and those who participate in vocational programs are 28 percent more likely to be employed than those who do not (Council of State Governments Justice Center 2015). However, states and jurisdictions struggle to improve education and employment outcomes for justice-involved populations for a number of key reasons, including the following:

Insufficient efforts to prioritize workforce development service

Most juvenile and criminal justice systems do not prioritize improving education and workforce development outcomes for young adults. For example, in a national survey conducted in 2019, only eight states reported that all youth incarcerated in juvenile justice facilities had been provided access to a full array of workforce development services, including soft-skills development, on-site/online career and technical education (CTE) programming, work-based learning, and courses that lead to industry-recognized credentials (Agus-Kleinman, Salomon, and Weber 2019). When it comes to accessing opportunities for postsecondary education, the state of the field is similar. Another national survey from 2019 indicated that only 12 states provided incentives and supports to promote postsecondary education opportunities for justice-involved populations, and only 17 states offered incarcerated individuals access to a full range of postsecondary programs aligned with local labor market trends and employer needs (Bacon et al. 2020).

System silos and a lack of collaboration and formal partnerships

Many jurisdictions lack formal partnerships between justice, workforce development and education agencies, and community providers. This lack of collaboration across systems can lead to jurisdictions' inability to access and leverage all available funding streams to support programming for young adults in the justice system. For example, multiple federal funding streams focus on CTE or workforce development, such as *Perkins V* and *WIOA*. However, in many states, justice agencies are not accessing these resources despite an existing set-aside for justice-involved populations. For example, only 11 states report using *WIOA* funds to support CTE or workforce development services for youth in their correctional facilities (Agus-Kleinman, Salomon, and Weber 2019). Additionally, in most states, justice agencies are disconnected from local workforce investment boards and do not participate in board funding conversations, which leaves young adults in the justice system without an advocate at the table to ensure that *WIOA* state funding plans include a focus on this population.

The lack of formal partnerships between agencies, institutions, and providers also results in minimal collaboration around program referrals, case planning, and service delivery. Justice, education, and workforce development agencies are often unaware of what providers are available to serve this population, leading to challenges in making referrals or the duplication of services. Additionally, agencies and providers often do not share information about participants involved in programming, which can result in multiple case plans for the same young adults and a lack of alignment in programming and treatment.

Lack of formal intake, screening, and service-matching processes

Systems and programs working with the justice-involved population to improve education and employment outcomes seldom have formal intake protocols in place to effectively screen, assess,

and refer young people to the most appropriate services targeted to their individualized needs. Program and referral decisions are often made without key relevant information about a participant's risk level, criminogenic or behavioral health needs, or current education or workforce skill levels or career interests. As a result, young adults are not being individually matched with programs and services that address their specific needs, which research shows is critical to reducing reoffending. Many programs, rather, use a one-size-fits-all model in which each participant receives the same service regardless of their needs, skills, or education level. Additionally, without a system in place to assess the other needs that a young person may have, such as special education or behavioral health needs, programs are not addressing the whole individual, making success less likely.

Limited knowledge of criminal justice populations

Many of the strongest education and workforce development programs lack knowledge of the unique needs of justice-involved populations and successful research-based strategies to improve their outcomes. Workforce development and education program leadership and staff often do not receive adequate training on how to assess and address young people's criminogenic needs, build collaborative case plans with justice systems, and connect participants to research-based services that they may need outside of an education or workforce focus. Additionally, workforce development and education programs are often not designed in a way that is amenable to the participation of a justice-involved population, as many of these programs have rigid eligibility, intake, and attendance policies and procedures that may create barriers (for example, transportation issues, meetings with probation officers, etc.). Additionally, programs may have long periods of skills training before employment, often without providing participants any form of compensation, a particular challenge for young adults with limited supports trying to transition to independence.

Failure to address the comprehensive needs of individuals in the justice system

Given their lack of knowledge of the justice-involved population, workforce development systems and providers struggle to comprehensively meet the full array of participants' needs, including substance use, mental health issues, and lack of housing and transportation. No one program is capable of addressing all of these needs, and providers often have limited capacity and staffing to provide comprehensive services, making partnership development even more important. However, unless some of these other needs are addressed, a participant may not be ready to fully engage in workforce development or educational programming, and these other needs may inhibit their success in the workforce.

Special education needs in particular are important for systems and programs providing workforce development services to address. A significant percentage of young adults in the justice system have been identified as having a special education need; therefore, properly meeting the needs of this population in a developmentally appropriate way requires actively considering special education and building supports into all programming. The lack of communication and information sharing between system partners, in this case education, justice, and workforce development providers, can result in individualized education programs (IEPs) or 504 plans⁴ not being shared. For young adults who are further removed from their secondary education programs and/or do not have these plans available, the identification of special education needs requires an assessment process at intake that many providers currently do not use.

Lack of employer engagement and ignoring collateral consequences

Systems and programs providing workforce development services to justice-involved young adults are often not engaging with local employers to inform program development or to make connections for participants with employment opportunities. Given the bias that many employers have against hiring young adults with a criminal history, employer engagement from program inception is critical. Involving employers in the development of services and coursework ensures that programming is aligned with industry-recognized credentials, local labor market and employer needs, and viable opportunities for not just a job but also a sustainable career pathway. Additionally, building relationships with employers can help set up connections and improve the referral process for participants to employment opportunities as soon as they are finished earning credentials and certifications.

Justice-involved young adults must also overcome statutorily mandated collateral consequences of justice system involvement. Legal restrictions placed on justice-involved individuals create additional barriers that make pursuing postsecondary education and securing gainful employment extremely difficult. These barriers can include limitations on applying for and accessing financial aid and a vast and often opaque set of occupational licensure restrictions. Many of the fastest growing fields, such as health care, have the strictest guidelines on credentialing, which can prevent those with a criminal record from being eligible for most jobs. Collateral consequences also impact additional needs young adults may have, such as housing. The [National Inventory of Collateral Consequences](#) documents over 1,000 laws at the state level that impact the ability of those with a record to access housing (Council of State Governments Justice Center 2020). As a result, knowledge of collateral consequences and legal restrictions are critical to building programs that set up young people to pursue viable pathways to credentialing and employment.

Lack of quality assurance protocols and failure to adhere to evidence-based practices

Consistent implementation is one of the most challenging components of developing evidence-based programs and practices. Although it is necessary to allow for local flexibility, overall core components of a program model, including target audience, dosage, partnerships, and case planning procedures, should be consistent internally within an organization and across service providers or affiliates for national programs. Ensuring implementation fidelity typically requires programs and systems to have robust quality assurance protocols in place that provide for ongoing monitoring and support for continuous improvement. However, due to a lack of resources, capacity, and knowledge around evidence-based practices, many workforce development programs—and the systems that oversee or fund them—lack key quality assurance processes and protocols, leading to inconsistent and disparate practices and ineffective program and participant outcomes.

⁴ The *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act* requires education institutions, in collaboration with parents (and older students), to tailor for each student with a disability an individualized education program that meets the unique needs of that student. Similarly, 504 plans may be developed to give students with disabilities the support they need as per Section 504 of the *Rehabilitation Act*.

Limited data collection and tracking of key education and employment outcome measures

States and jurisdictions struggle to collect, track, and use education and employment outcome data for justice-involved populations. Few jurisdictions or programs are able to accurately report on key outcome measures, such as credits earned, credential attainment, postsecondary education or job-training program enrollment, apprenticeship hours worked, and obtaining employment, let alone being able to evaluate the impact of workforce development programs on recidivism. According to a national survey conducted in 2019, only one-third of states are currently tracking whether youth obtain employment after their release from a juvenile justice facility, and the same number of states collect data on postsecondary degrees or diplomas earned while youth are incarcerated (Council of State Governments Justice Center 2020). Furthermore, even where the data are available, jurisdictions are not regularly reporting or sharing these data with key audiences or using data to help guide decision-making. Additionally, systems often do not have shared definitions of data measures, making the tracking and sharing of outcome data more difficult. Programs serving broader populations also struggle to disaggregate the data to evaluate how justice-involved participants are faring compared to program participants as a whole.

Key Elements of Developing Successful Diversion Programs for Young Adults that Incorporate Workforce Development

Limited research exists on workforce development programs that specifically serve justice-involved populations, and even less research is available on programs that target young adults, but the below sections outline some key elements consolidated from conversations with experts in the field and a review of available research. At the end of this brief are examples of how these elements are implemented by existing programs and a checklist to guide program administrators when incorporating workforce development services in their young adult diversion programs.

Use a multisystems approach to address the full range of young adults' needs and maximize available funding

Because no one system can address the diverse needs of young adults in the justice system, workforce development and education agencies, community-based organizations, and justice agencies must collaborate more effectively. At the systems level, agencies should develop formal partnerships through memoranda of understanding or agreements that focus on leveraging and consolidating limited resources, promoting information sharing, and developing high-quality programs. Agencies should work together and collaborate to access and braid funding available from federal and state sources, such as *WIOA* and *Perkins V*, to support the delivery of services for justice-involved young adults. Agreements should also make it possible for justice agency representatives to participate in state funding planning meetings and on workforce development boards, ensuring that justice-involved young adults are identified as a priority or target population and that funding

set-asides are fully used and monitored. Additionally, developing formal partnerships through agreements can help ensure that systems are required to share information on what programs and services are available to justice-involved young adults and share data on program outcome measures.

At the agency or program level, partnerships should focus on developing appropriate participant referral protocols, including sharing information, to the extent possible, on participants' history of justice involvement and results from their risk-and-needs assessments and any other screenings or assessments, if relevant. By sharing and using risk-and-needs information and results from other assessments, systems can ensure that the appropriate youth are being referred to the programs that best address their identified needs and not being asked duplicative questions upon arrival at each service provider. Partnerships must also focus on building the infrastructure and processes necessary to support front-line program staff working directly with participants. To ensure that young adults are not being overwhelmed or receiving duplicative or contradictory services, systems must engage in collaborative case planning and case management, where all systems working with the young person engage in regular meetings to review case plans and ensure that activities build upon each other and do not overwhelm the individual. These case plans should be shared between workforce development program staff and justice system case managers.

Lastly, it is critical that workforce development program staff working with justice-involved young adults have access to ongoing training on the unique needs of this population, as well as on promising practices related to the juvenile and criminal justice systems overall. Some areas of training that can benefit program staff include utilizing the risk-need-responsivity model, cognitive/adolescent brain development, and employing graduated responses to promote positive behavior change.⁵

Engage employers to align programs with local labor market and create viable pathways to employment

To ensure that justice-involved young adults have access to high-quality services, whenever possible, workforce development programming should be aligned with national or state-level CTE standards, and include opportunities for participants to engage in hands-on, work-based learning either through online coursework or in person. Additionally, programs should ensure that credits earned through CTE courses can lead to industry- and employer-recognized credentials that offer young adults a clear pathway to employment. It is also critical that employers, workforce development boards, and local chambers of commerce are involved early in the development of programming and coursework to ensure that programs are addressing local labor market needs and, through these connections, creating opportunities for participants to be recruited directly to paid employment or apprenticeships.

Additionally, to improve employment outcomes for individuals with a criminal record, workforce development and education systems must be aware of and account for collateral consequences. The first step is understanding state laws and what barriers they may present to obtaining employment for young adults with a history of justice involvement, identifying what career pathways may not be available to this population, and then tailoring coursework and participants' expectations accordingly. Systems should also help educate and advise participants on how to complete job

⁵ According to the Center for Children's Law and Policy's [Graduated Responses Toolkit](#), a graduated response is an approach that combines sanctions for violations and incentives for continued progress.

and postsecondary education applications given their prior involvement with the juvenile and/or criminal justice systems. In some circumstances, it may be helpful for systems and program providers to develop partnerships directly with legal aid organizations to help participants with record expungement to fully eliminate the impact of collateral consequences where possible.

For additional CTE resources, see **Exhibit B2**.

Develop robust recruitment, intake, and service-matching protocols

Education, justice, and workforce systems must work together to develop referral, intake, and service-matching protocols that ensure the full participation of justice-involved young adults. Justice systems should be knowledgeable about the programs available to this population and strengthen the referral process to improve linkages to providers that match each individual's needs and interests. Intake processes for workforce development programs should include a seamless way for justice systems to transfer relevant participant information, such as the results of risk-and-needs screening and assessments, behavioral health screenings, additional information from already-developed case and/or reentry plans, and any other information that was previously captured and does not need to be duplicated. Before or upon referral, eligible participants should also have their education levels and workforce development skills assessed, be administered a career-interest survey, and share their previous employment histories, all of which can be used to inform service matching.

One of the most critical components to ensuring more successful program and participant outcomes is the ability of programs to match individuals to the most appropriate services based on their individualized needs. In order to do this, systems should have service registries and service matrices that provide information on available programs, their eligibility criteria, services provided, needs addressed, and evidence base or standards, among other things, to help facilitate targeted referrals.

Develop quality assurance protocols and collect and use data to evaluate progress and drive program improvement

To properly assess program success and improve services, key education and employment outcome measures must be collected and reported. Program and participant outcome measures should be collected and tracked at the program level, and then shared with justice, education, and workforce

EXHIBIT B2: ADDITIONAL CTE RESOURCES

- [Advance CTE](#) is a national nonprofit organization representing state CTE directors and state CTE leaders. In addition to a resource center that houses information on individual state CTE guidelines and resources, the organization developed a policy benchmark tool to help states evaluate and strengthen their CTE program approval policies and processes.
- The [Association for Career & Technical Education \(ACTE\)](#) is a national membership association that seeks to promote high-quality CTE. ACTE has developed a quality framework to help programs and courses align themselves with research-based elements of high-quality CTE.
- The [Perkins Collaborative Resource Network](#) provides a range of resources on state plans and Perkins data.

development systems at the local and state levels. Example outcome measures include credits earned, certificates or diplomas earned, soft-skill development, employment or apprenticeships obtained, and enrollment in postsecondary education or job-training programs. Programs should report these measures on a regular basis, and use these data to identify areas for improvement.

It is also critical that programs are able to disaggregate these data by justice-involved populations if programs are serving a broader audience.

Systems overseeing or funding workforce development programs should have quality assurance protocols in place to monitor progress and evaluate results. This includes ongoing monitoring of programs for adherence to quality standards, evidence-based practices, and implementation fidelity, as well as regularly collecting and reviewing outcome data. Systems should use these data to support and provide technical assistance to programs that need improvement, or in some cases, corrective action, and ultimately to hold them accountable if improvements are not made.

Future Research Agenda

To develop effective policies and practices that are targeted specifically toward young adults in the justice system, the field would benefit from additional research and evaluation. A few areas that would benefit from additional research include the following:

Risk-and-needs assessments for young adults

Properly identifying the right level of justice system involvement and appropriately matching young adults to services require the use of validated risk-and-needs assessment tools. However, few studies explore the validity of common juvenile and adult risk-and-needs assessment tools for the young adult population. Large-scale validation studies must be conducted across both juvenile and adult systems to identify the validity of these tools specifically for the young adult population, and to determine if a new risk-and-needs assessment should be developed.

What works to improve outcomes for young adults

Although a significant amount of research has been conducted to identify what works to improve outcomes and reduce recidivism for youth in the juvenile justice system and adults in the criminal justice system, very little research has paid direct attention to the young adult population that straddles both systems. Brain development research suggests that the young adult population is distinct and has different needs than youth and adults. For example, we know that young adults are more impulsive than adults but are more cognitively developed than youth. Yet, interventions that have a history of success targeting impulsive behavior, such as cognitive behavioral therapy, have not been validated for the young adult population. Additionally, young adults face a range of other life challenges (e.g., securing housing, transportation, and employment) as they transition into adulthood and self-sufficiency. More research is needed to identify what policies and practices are effective at addressing these distinct needs, and to reduce recidivism and improve outcomes for young adults.

Effectiveness of workforce development and diversion programs for justice-involved populations

Very few evaluations have been conducted on the impact of workforce development programs and services for the young adult justice-involved population. A limited number of these programs exist, but additional studies are needed to better identify key components or elements of effective programming and scale up program models that we know are improving employment outcomes specifically for this population.

Additionally, although the research is fairly clear on the positive impact of diversion programs on recidivism for low-risk individuals involved in the justice system, limited research exists on the impact of these programs on the young adult population. Researchers should conduct additional studies on different types of diversion programs in the juvenile and adult justice systems and at various entry points to better determine their effectiveness for young adults. Research should also look into the possibility of net widening—a greater number of individuals being controlled by the criminal justice systems—as a result of diversion, as some earlier studies on diversion have indicated that, despite good intentions, some diversion programs have unnecessarily pushed individuals further into the justice system.

Conclusion

Providing effective education and workforce development services to justice-involved young adults is critical to improving long-term outcomes and supporting this population as they transition into a productive and successful adulthood. Young adults are a challenging population; however, they also represent a large opportunity to have long-term positive impacts. As has been illustrated throughout this document, strong programming can have a profound impact on lifetime outcomes. Jurisdictions must engage in a number of cross-systems activities to help a justice-involved young adult population achieve improved outcomes. Systems must create formal agreements that help divert this population from deeper justice system involvement; properly match justice-involved young adults with services that match their identified needs; engage in a strength-based approach that considers the unique needs of young adults; and ensure that services provided utilize evidence-based approaches that are of the highest quality.

However, although there has been a marked increase in knowledge about adolescent brain development and how the young adult population is a developmentally distinct group with unique needs, limited research is available on what works to improve their outcomes, and very few studies have been conducted to determine the effectiveness of workforce development programs with this population. The need for continued research is imperative in order to improve outcomes and ensure that young adults are provided with effective workforce development programs that are targeted toward their particular needs. This work is challenging, but a road map to success is beginning to be formed by research and, while the need for improved services is pressing, the opportunity exists for jurisdictions to have a profound impact if they commit to engaging with a justice-involved young adult population in a targeted and meaningful way.

Examples of Diversion Programs for Young Adults that Incorporate Workforce Development

Roca

Providing Comprehensive Services

Based in Massachusetts and with a location in Baltimore, Maryland, Roca is a nonprofit that serves high-risk young adults who have been previously incarcerated or placed on juvenile/adult probation. Roca has developed an intensive, 48-month intervention model—shaped by two decades of outcome data—specifically designed to address the criminogenic, education, and employment needs of high-risk young adults. The model is based on five key components: (1) relentless outreach to identify and recruit the highest risk young adults through a trust-building process that can take months; (2) building meaningful relationships through a mentoring model that provides support to the participants outside of the program and after graduation; (3) stage-based programming designed to help participants accomplish individualized cognitive and behavioral goals rather than a preestablished timeline of completion; (4) partnering with institutions including police, probation officers, employers, and other community-based organizations to meet youth’s comprehensive needs; and (5) performance-based management that uses constant feedback on outcomes to drive decision-making around program management. Roca’s comprehensive approach to service delivery has resulted in unprecedented outcomes with this challenging population—97 percent of participants who completed the program have no new incarcerations, and 64 percent of those who obtained a job maintain employment for over a year.

Florida Department of Juvenile Justice

Partnering with Employers

The Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) uses a formal advisory group, composed of employers, other business representatives, the Department of Education, and the Department of Economic Opportunity to guide and support its workforce development and service decisions. The process, which was created and defined in the *Career and Professional Education Act (CAPE)* was instituted to provide structure and support to systems in Florida that provide services to youth. The goals of the advisory group are to improve middle and high school academic performance by providing rigorous and relevant curriculum opportunities to youth under system supervision; develop career-themed courses that articulate to postsecondary-level coursework and lead to industry certifications; and support local and regional economic development by meeting employers’ workforce needs while providing access to high-wage and high-demand careers. To accomplish these goals, the Florida DJJ works with the advisory group to tailor the workforce development services it provides in facilities to youth and young adults on probation in the community to meet local labor market needs and ensure that certificates provided are recognized by local employers. The advisory group engages annually to assess the CAPE credentials funding list and adjust for shifts in employer needs and the local economy. The advisory group also provides a way for the Florida DJJ to educate employers about the needs of justice-involved youth and young adults, which helps raise the comfort level of employers in hiring individuals from this population and gives them confidence that the youth and young adults will have skills and training directly applicable to their workforce needs.

Oregon Youth Authority

Prioritizing Educational and Employment Services

The Oregon Youth Authority (OYA) has invested in ensuring that the youth and young adults in its custody—who can be up to age 25—receive high-quality education services in facilities and when they reenter the community. Toward that end, OYA created positions for two statewide education coordinators, who plan, develop, and implement multijurisdictional programs that support the education and employment needs of youth in OYA’s custody. The coordinators manage the Vocation Education Services for Older Youth program, which helps high school graduates pursue a college education, develop vocational skills, and obtain certifications to prepare them for employment, connect them to viable career opportunities, and help them successfully transition to the community. To coordinate this program, the OYA staff must work with multiple partners, including OYA field services, local school districts, education service districts, community colleges, apprenticeship committees, industry certification providers, and other state/community agencies to ensure the delivery of individual services that are integrated into youth’s overall treatment plan. The education coordinators ensure that this coordination is accomplished throughout the state.

Checklist for Incorporating Workforce Development Services in a Young Adult Diversion Program

A. Use a multisystems approach to address the full range of young adults' needs and maximize funding

1. Do formal partnerships exist between key entities, including justice, education, and workforce development agencies; employers; and service providers?
 - Yes
 - Somewhat
 - No
 - Unsure
2. Do these partnerships have formal shared outcome goals around employment and education?
3. Are programs developed and funded by these entities designed to focus on and meet young adults' comprehensive workforce, education, criminogenic, and behavioral health needs?
4. Do justice stakeholders participate in state-level workforce development and funding conversations, including *WIOA* boards and *Perkins V* state planning meetings, as advocates for justice-involved populations?
5. Do education and workforce development agencies and providers participate in state/local justice collaboratives?
6. Are state and local agencies working together across systems to identify and leverage federal, state, and local funding sources and braid funding to support education and workforce development services for justice-involved populations?
7. Is there a shared service development and service procurement strategy across systems?
8. Is there a specific registry/service map that identifies workforce development and education providers and programs that work with young adults and justice-involved populations?
9. Is there a formalized, collaborative approach to case planning, such as regular treatment-team meetings, to ensure all entities coordinate on service referrals, engagement, and delivery?
10. Are there annual training opportunities to educate staff about available programs and protocols across systems?
11. Are trainings available to educate agencies and service providers on research/best practices related to justice-involved young adults?
12. Do shared quality assurance protocols, performance measures, and outcome evaluation processes measure the success of workforce development programs across systems?
13. Is there a formalized process to share, review, and use outcome data to guide service and funding decisions?

B. Engage employers to align programs with the local labor market and create viable pathways to employment

1. Are CTE and career pathways, certifications, and curricula aligned with national and local standards and informed by employer feedback?
2. Do education and workforce development programs include a focus on employability skills development, such as on workplace attitudes, norms, and behaviors, and are these curricula informed by employers?
3. Do workforce development programs include partnerships with employers to provide work-based or experiential learning opportunities and paid training?
4. Do workforce development programs incorporate formal linkages with employers to ensure youth can obtain internships, apprenticeships, or employment opportunities upon completion?
5. Do employers receive regular training on best practices for hiring and supporting justice-involved populations, including potential tax benefits?
6. Do employers receive ongoing support for addressing workplace challenges with specific program participants/cohorts?
7. Is training provided to program participants on what questions regarding criminal history they must answer yes to on both job and education applications?
8. Are system-wide efforts made with employers to understand criminal history information in a nondiscriminatory manner?
9. Are statewide collateral consequences (such as occupational licensure restrictions for those convicted of an offense) identified, shared, and used to inform system-wide workforce development programs and targeted employer partnerships?
10. Do justice-involved young adults have information about record expungement and/or case closure and access to resources to support this process?

C. Develop robust recruitment, intake, and service-matching protocols

1. Are young adults engaged in developing their education and career plan?
2. Are education and workforce development diversion and other types of programs developed and funded to specifically target currently or formerly justice-involved young adults?
3. Do programs have clear eligibility criteria that designate the population of young adults best served by the program, including their risks and needs?
4. Do programs have documented referral policies/processes that include what information should be shared across systems, such as assessments and court/probation conditions?
5. Are validated risk-and-needs screening and assessment tools used to inform program eligibility and service referral decisions?

6. Are career-interest surveys and workforce development and educational skills assessments administered by programs at intake and used to guide CTE participation decisions?
7. Are special education needs identified through a validated assessment and incorporated into case planning and workforce development services?
8. Do workforce development programs employ service-matching guidelines and/or service matrices to ensure that justice-involved young adults are also referred to services that directly target their criminogenic and behavioral health needs?
9. Are enrollment periods flexible to allow for rolling entry so young adults who enter into the justice system can begin program participation immediately?
10. Are administrative procedures and requirements for enrollment minimized?
11. Is program scheduling flexible to accommodate the schedules of young adults (such as evening hours) and to allow participants to make court and probation appointments as needed?

D. Develop quality assurance protocols and collect and use data to evaluate progress and drive program improvement

1. Do programs have clearly defined service models and treatment goals that guide case planning and service delivery, and are they tailored to the needs of a young adult justice-involved population?
2. Are quality assurance reviews regularly conducted—by both individual providers and across systems—to ensure program models are implemented with fidelity to the research?
3. Are key program and youth outcome performance measures, such as recidivism, education and certificate attainment, and job placement identified across programs/systems and tracked in a centralized, consistent, and accessible way?
4. Are data analyzed by provider, program, youth demographics, and other key variables to develop a nuanced understanding of system performance and outcomes?
5. Are data on provider, program, and youth outcomes reported regularly and across systems, and is this information used to drive ongoing programmatic, strategic-planning, and funding decisions?

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Appendix C.

Partnership Profiles

Alameda County, California

Located in the Bay Area of Northern California, Alameda County has a population of 1.67 million. The largest industries in the area are professional services, health care, and manufacturing. Restoring Our Communities (ROC) is a program at Laney College run by and for formerly incarcerated students to support youth/young adults ages 16 to 24 years and adults on probation, parole, and/or supervision. With the support of a variety of partners, ROC helps prospective students enroll and equips enrolled students to anticipate and transcend barriers, envision and implement their educational and career goals, make informed decisions, increase their self-determination, and create positive life outcomes.

Goals and objectives

The partnership joined the Young Adult Diversion Technical Assistance initiative with the following goals:

1. Further develop pre- and post-release support for youth in custody at the Alameda Juvenile Justice Center; improve referral and tracking processes with the public defender's office; and encourage reentry programs and collaborative courts to use education as a diversion tool and pathway to positive life outcomes.
2. Develop integrated planning processes with offices at Laney College, including student employment services, to provide background-friendly workforce/job opportunities; extended opportunity programs and services (EOPS); and B2B Learning Community (a collaboration of Laney EOPS and Beyond Emancipation), which provides services and support to current and former foster youth.
3. Develop a restorative justice curriculum to support the healing and readiness of youth and young adults to reenter education and engage in workforce development on and off campus.
4. Develop a nonpunitive/non-surveillance-based method of reporting the efficacy of its diversion program to correctional supervisors and a tool to assess the success of diversion long term.
5. Develop and scale a records relief program, which provides a process for clearing a person's criminal record, in collaboration with the Office of the Alameda County Public Defender.

Partnership

ROC leads the partnership in collaboration with the Office of the Alameda County Public Defender. ROC is housed at Laney College, a community college that serves approximately 17,000 students annually. ROC is led by formerly incarcerated individuals and works to support formerly incarcerated students with enrolling, registering for classes, applying for financial aid, and developing tools to be successful academically and personally. The Office of the Alameda County Public Defender handles approximately 40,000 cases a year and has a staff of 100 attorneys and 18 investigators. In 2013, the office started a county-wide Clean Slate program. The program allows for reduction of felonies to misdemeanors, early termination of probation, and dismissal of cases for qualifying individuals.

Additionally, the partnership has begun collaborating with a community service organization—Rubicon Programs—and is building relationships with a county district attorney’s office and juvenile hall with the goal of providing education and workforce development services as part of a program for deferred entry of judgment.

Accomplishments

The partnership has scaled its current work and has expanded its services. The partnership has increased its collaboration with the public defender’s office and has supported more than 30 students in dismissing or reducing past records, with many students receiving multiple record changes. This success has shown the value of the collaboration between ROC and the public defender’s office and has paved the way for increased cooperation.

The partnership received two new grants. It received \$1.1 million from the California Community Colleges Board of Governors office to scale work at Laney College and serve as a model for other community colleges in the state. The partnership also received a grant from Alameda County to provide services to students who are eligible for county-level probation through Assembly Bill 109.

Additionally, the partnership built and launched a case-management system. The partnership learned about the utility and specifications of different case-management systems at the 2019 Young Adult Diversion Convening, discussed options with other partnerships, and worked with its coach to develop its own system.

Next steps

The partnership is developing a report on its Clean Slate program to share with other community colleges, prospective participants, and potential funders. The report will discuss national and local research on Clean Slate programs and describe the partnership’s successes in addressing gaps identified in the literature. The report will propose recommendations and offer directions for future expansion and improvement.

Lessons Learned

Formerly incarcerated individuals—who are uniquely positioned to provide services to justice-involved young adults because they understand the needs and barriers faced by this population—sometimes need personalized coaching and assistance with managing and growing programs.

Florida

A state-level partnership, the Diversion Initiative for Vocational Employability Related to Technology (DIVERT) partnership works to provide youth on pre- or post-arrest diversion the essential skills needed to become gainfully employed and avoid future contact with the juvenile justice system. During the Young Adult Diversion Technical Assistance initiative, the partnership started a coding training program for justice-involved young adults in Pinellas County, part of the Tampa–St. Petersburg metro area with a population of roughly 975,000. The DIVERT program engages youth in a challenging, comprehensive coding curriculum that leads to students being eligible for three college credits upon completion. Guest speakers who work in the technology field introduce students to real-world careers that leverage the coding skills gained during the DIVERT program.

Goals and objectives

The partnership's specific goals follow:

1. Provide an after-school program for at-risk youth that provides preemployment transition services and hands-on training in coding and qualifies for college credit.
2. Build partnerships with employers, VR agencies, and other organizations to enable referrals and linkages to services, resulting in holistic support for young adults in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics programs.
3. Research and identify funding sources to support and ultimately sustain the preemployment program as a diversion strategy.

Partnership

The partnership is led by the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice in collaboration with the following:

- St. Petersburg College: The college offers 180 degree and certificate programs across 11 campuses and training centers in Pinellas County.
- Pinellas CareerSource: The local job center, Pinellas CareerSource provides career development services, including job fairs, training, and labor market information.
- Pinellas County Schools: The eighth largest district in the state, Pinellas County Schools serves over 100,000 students in the county.
- The Florida Department of Education Career and Technical Education (CTE) Division: The division manages CTE programs in middle schools, high schools, and postsecondary schools across the state.
- The Florida Department of Education Division of Vocational Rehabilitation: The division has 900 employees and works to help individuals with disabilities find and maintain employment.
- The Florida Department of Economic Opportunity: The department administers state and federal programs to enhance economic development.

- The Florida Afterschool Network: The network establishes collaborative partnerships, promotes quality standards, and advocates for policies to promote high-quality after-school programs in the state.
- Florida Ready to Work: Funded by the state of Florida, Ready to Work is a career-readiness program that provides job skills assessments and credentials for participants.
- Eckerd Connects Strive Academy (Pinellas): The academy is an alternative school and day treatment program established by Pinellas County Schools and the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice to serve justice-involved teens (ages 12–19).

Accomplishments

The partnership developed and implemented a technology training program during the initiative. In DIVERT’s first cohort, five students completed the program, making them eligible to receive college credit.

The partnership was able to engage valuable partners through the technical assistance initiative, strengthening existing connections and forging new ones. The lead has developed a supportive, collaborative relationship with the participating college, gaining meaningful buy-in and engagement with the partnership’s work. School district and workforce partners collaborated to identify potential recruits, pivot program services to changing circumstances, and build connections with the community.

Next steps

In the second and third cohorts, the program had lower than expected recruitment and attendance numbers. Based on student feedback, the partnership determined that these challenges may be attributable to the difficulty of the coding curriculum paired with the significant time commitment required to participate. The partnership initially refined the program by reducing the face-to-face instruction time commitment to better work with student schedules, but has found in its most recent cohort that this structure may not provide sufficient support for students. The partnership is now exploring potential adaptations to its model given these findings, working together to explore such approaches as connecting students with existing workforce training and degree-seeking programs, and sharing information with local high school administrators to outline students’ options.

Lessons Learned

- Recruitment of students for a voluntary after-school program needs to be a primary role of a partner.
- A voluntary after-school program should include varied activities and opportunities for students to practice their skills learned through a work experience program.
- Engagement of employers to help design and deliver the program is essential.

Hampden County, Massachusetts

Located in western Massachusetts, Hampden County has a population of about 470,000. The most common industries in the area are health care, manufacturing, and education. The Hampden County Young Adults in Criminal Justice partnership was established to develop solutions to enhance public safety, reduce recidivism, and improve individual outcomes for young adults ages 18 to 24 in Hampden County.

Goals and objectives

The partnership entered the Young Adult Diversion Technical Assistance initiative with the following goals:

1. Develop an innovative young adult court model.
2. Establish a specialized unit for young adults in the county's jail.
3. Improve diversion and reentry models for young adults.
4. Explore and study solutions for young adults in Hampden County.

Partnership

The Hampden County District Attorney's Office leads the partnership. The district attorney's office is responsible for the prosecution of all criminal cases in the county. The office is also involved in youth engagement and crime prevention as well as addiction and substance abuse programs. Other partners include the following:

- The Springfield District Probation Court: The court supervises the cities of Springfield and West Springfield, as well as the town of Longmeadow. It includes a mental health court, an adult drug court, and the newly opened Emerging Adult Court of Hope.
- Hampden County Sheriff's Department: The sheriff's department operates correctional and support facilities in the county, including the Hampden County Correctional Center, the Western Massachusetts Regional Women's Correctional Center, the Stonybrook Stabilization and Treatment Centers, and the Western Massachusetts Recovery and Wellness Center.
- Roca: Established in 1988, Roca operates five sites in Massachusetts and one in Baltimore with the goal of supporting high-risk young men and women through outreach, programming, and collaboration with community partners.

Accomplishments

The partnership built support for and established a special young adult court in its jurisdiction—the Emerging Adult Court of Hope. The court had its first session on Feb. 27, 2020. The court was forced to shut down for several months due to the COVID-19 pandemic but has since reopened. As part of the technical assistance initiative, representatives of the partnership traveled to San Francisco to observe and learn from another young adult court.

The partnership learned about terminology, how to use rewards, and the types of interventions that can be helpful for the young adult population. This experience helped the partnership with establishing its court.

Next steps

The partnership hopes to grow the Emerging Adult Court of Hope and increase the involvement of young adults in the Sheriff's Department programs.

Lessons Learned

Justice-involved young adults have different needs and require different treatment than the adult population. Communication needs to be clear and concise and free from opportunities for misinterpretation. Attitudes and behaviors that would normally be reasons for probation violation for adults have to be treated differently for young adults.

Hattiesburg, Mississippi

Located in southeastern Mississippi, Hattiesburg has a population of nearly 150,000 people. The largest industries in the area are health care, retail, and education. Pine Belt Mental Healthcare Resources, Hattiesburg Public School District, Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services–Vocational Rehabilitation, and Pearl River Community College are collaborating to provide diversion services to transition-age youth. The partnership is building on Crossover Xpand, a program that provides mental health, behavioral health, and wraparound services to youth who are at risk for or already involved in child protective services or the juvenile justice system. The partnership built a Central Diversion Team (CDT) to focus on transition-age youth (ages 16–21) with severe emotional disorders who need supports to remain in the community and are at risk for out-of-home placements. The CDT consisted of agency representatives from the existing Multidisciplinary Assessment and Planning (MAP) team. The MAP team members are from career and technical education, workforce readiness, juvenile justice, child protective services, and behavioral and primary health care organizations.

Goals and objectives

The partnership joined the Young Adult Diversion Technical Assistance initiative with the following goals:

- Promote youth access, voice, and ownership in the decision-making processes to support a healthy transition into adulthood.
- Increase youth access to service agencies (e.g., workforce, education) and resources by creating interagency agreements.
- Establish a continuum of solid, evidence-based services to divert transition-age youth from child protective services and juvenile justice involvement toward thriving in the least restrictive community setting.

Partnership

The partnership is led by Pine Belt Mental Healthcare Resources. Established in 1973, Pine Belt Mental Healthcare Resources provides mental health services in 11 counties in Mississippi from 48 different locations. Partners include the following:

- Hattiesburg Public School District: The district operates nine schools in the city, serving approximately 4,000 students.
- Petal School District: Located just outside Hattiesburg, the district serves approximately 4,000 students in five different schools.
- Pearl River Community College: The college provides associate degrees and workforce training to approximately 5,000 students across four locations.
- Mississippi Department of Rehabilitation Services–Vocational Rehabilitation: The department provides evaluation, counseling and guidance, educational assistance, and job training and placement to help individuals with disabilities become independent and find employment.

- Forrest County Juvenile Detention Center: Operated by the county sheriff’s office, the detention center houses juveniles between the ages of 10 and 17.
- Mississippi Department of Child Protective Services: Created by the state legislature in 2016, the department is the state’s lead child welfare agency.
- Forrest County Youth Court: The court handles criminal cases involving youth below the age of 18 and matters involving the abuse and neglect of juveniles in Forrest County.
- Kids Hub Child Advocacy Center: A nonprofit organization, Kids Hub provides advocacy and forensic interview services for victims of child abuse at the request of the Mississippi Department of Human Services and local law enforcement.

During the technical assistance initiative, the partnership worked with its coach to specify the target population and hone in on recidivism as a focus area. The partnership set up regular monthly meetings at the same time day and time and a listserv to facilitate communication between meetings.

Accomplishments

The partnership developed a focus on transition-age youth and their needs. It worked to gain a better understanding of how to collaborate with school districts and community colleges and developed a process for youth referrals that involve multiple agencies. Additionally, it created a pandemic-specific resource directory and continued meetings virtually after the onset of restrictions related to COVID-19.

Next steps

Moving forward, the partnership will work to increase family engagement in the MAP team and create strategies for connecting family members to resources from various agencies.

Lessons Learned

A mental health agency can be effective in leading a diversion partnership because of experience with multidisciplinary team leadership, grants management, and providing supports that at-risk youth need for their social, emotional, and behavioral growth.

Kent County, Michigan

Located in western Michigan, Kent County has a population of approximately 650,000. The largest industries in the area are manufacturing, health care, and retail. Lighthouse Academy and its partners—community colleges, employers, county juvenile detention centers, and a substance abuse program—are collaborating to develop a program aimed at providing educational services to justice-involved young adults while in confinement and upon release.

Goals and objectives

The partnership aims to reduce recidivism among young adults by providing educational services. During the Young Adult Diversion Technical Assistance initiative, the partnership worked to do the following:

- Strengthen and establish the collaborations necessary to provide services and refer young adults to the program.
- Develop the program’s operational structure and policies, and tailor services to address the specific needs of young adults.
- Establish performance measures and processes to collect, analyze, and use recidivism and education data to track outcomes and improve the program’s efforts.

Partnership

The partnership is led by Lighthouse Academy in collaboration with Kent County Juvenile Detention, Kent County Correctional Facility, and Wedgewood Christian Services. Established in 2005, Lighthouse Academy is a charter school with five campuses, including one inside the juvenile detention facility and another inside the adult correctional facility. Kent County Juvenile Detention provides temporary care and custody for juveniles pending court disposition or transfer to another facility, with a focus on providing services to reduce further involvement with the justice system. The facility has a capacity of 69 and employs 2,014 staff members, including school, medical, and mental health professionals. The Kent County Correctional Facility accommodates approximately 1,100 inmates and provides mental health treatment, pretrial screening, and educational services. Wedgewood Christian Services, which was founded in 1960, is a nonprofit organization that provides services to youth, including counseling, residential treatment, and education.

Accomplishments

The partnership developed a transitions passport to help students as they move between programs inside and outside of their academy. Lighthouse Academy staff hope that the passport will provide the needed structure to ensure students receive the services and training they need during transitions. The partnership also improved its relationship with the juvenile detention facility by engaging with new leadership and illustrating the success of the program. This has resulted in an improved referral process both within the facility and upon release.

Next steps

Lighthouse Academy will continue to tailor its program to meet the needs of the participants and expand its reach. In addition, Lighthouse will continue work with the detention center to build programming into case plans and support increased attendance, as well as to support transition from the detention center back into the community.

Lessons Learned

Working in a formal capacity with the justice system to develop incentives for student participation is a key component of improving attendance.

Maintaining open communication with all partners is beneficial. The more people involved, the more success the program and the students will have.

Kentucky

The Kentucky Young Adult Diversion Partnership is a network of state, regional, and local agencies. It aims to successfully transition at-risk youth and justice-involved young adults into adulthood and economic self-sufficiency by supporting the attainment of academic and employment success through collective diversion strategies.

Goals and objectives

The partnership's specific goals follow:

1. Engage young adults and at-risk youth with academic and employment opportunities to gain economic self-sufficiency.
2. Increase attainment of GED® credentials, GED Plus credentials and certificates, and high school diplomas by at-risk young adults and youth.
3. Increase information and data sharing across partners to create a “warm handoff” for youth transitioning across services.

Partnership

The partnership is led by Kentucky Skills U and the Kentucky Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ). Kentucky Skills U provides free adult education in all 120 counties to help Kentuckians obtain a GED. Through Kentucky Skills U, Kentuckians can gain reading, math, and communications skills that place them on a path to higher education and training and earn certifications to move ahead in their careers. The Kentucky DJJ provides a range of services to sentenced, committed, probated, and detained youth and their families, creating opportunities for those youth to develop into productive, responsible citizens while enhancing public safety. Other partners include the following:

- The Kentucky Department of Education: The department provides policy and guidance for the over 1,500 K–12 schools in the state.
- Kentucky Career Center: The career center provides employment and workforce development services for individuals and employers in the state as well as administers unemployment insurance.
- Kentucky Community and Technical College System: Across 16 colleges, the system offers associate degrees, certificate programs, and general education for transfer to four-year universities.
- Department of Corrections: The Department of Corrections provides a range of services to reduce recidivism, including reentry, probation, and parole.
- In addition, the partnership had representation from the Kentucky Department for Community Based Services; Cabinet for Health and Family Services; Office of the Secretary; Department for Behavioral Health, Developmental and Intellectual Disabilities; Job Corps; and the Kentucky Partnership for Families and Children.

The Kentucky partnership faced an evolving policy and programmatic context throughout the course of this initiative, including substantial legislative and leadership changes. The partners discovered that some of the goals and methods outlined at the outset of this initiative no longer aligned with the most up-to-date requirements and preferred approaches. Additionally, as they familiarized themselves with each partner, the partners uncovered major roadblocks that changed basic assumptions about how the partnership would work. For example, although the partnership initially set out to serve justice-involved youth between the ages of 16 and 24 with a single comprehensive program, the partners discovered that two separate but closely aligned programs would be necessary because of different legislative restrictions for minors and young adults.

In order to successfully meet the needs of the target population, given this new information and other similar policy developments, the partnership decided to first take a step back and establish the basic structures and relationships necessary to build the foundation for a strong partnership. The partners identified two key initiatives to set the stage for the partnership (see Next steps below for more detail).

Accomplishments

The partnership increased communication and collaboration through in-person retreats, standing partnership meetings, and the development of a shared understanding of each partner's role. The various partners, once separate entities with little cross-agency connection, have come together as a partnership to establish connections to colleagues in other agencies who often serve the same population. The partnership has established a better understanding of each partner's role in serving young adults so that partners feel more able to reach out to colleagues and act as a connection point or "warm handoff" for young adults navigating multiple services.

Next steps

The Kentucky partnership has identified an opportunity to maximize its impact on justice-involved youth by streamlining processes, increasing communication across departments, and providing a "warm handoff" at key connection points for young adults navigating the services provided by various agencies. The partnership has developed two initiatives to facilitate this work: a data-sharing agreement and a partnership resource guide. The partnership expects that the data-sharing agreement and partnership resource guide will help partners better understand one another's work, identify where opportunities exist to streamline work, and understand the needs and outcomes of youth served by each partner.

Lessons Learned

The partnership began the initiative with the goal of involving as many organizations as possible. As a result, the size of the group and the scope of the work became very large, hindering the partnership's ability to move forward.

It can be challenging for statewide partnerships to meet the diverse needs and challenges of different regions.

Los Angeles County, California

Located in Southern California, Los Angeles County has a population of 10.1 million. The largest industries in the county are health care, retail, and manufacturing. The Los Angeles County partnership focuses on improving education and workforce outcomes for older youth and young adults while in county juvenile correctional camps and when released back into the community. The target population is youth and young adults entering Los Angeles County Residential Treatment Services Bureau facilities, located in Los Angeles County, following a Camp Community Placement order made in juvenile court. The youth and young adults were detained and primarily assigned to the Camp Community Transition Program and ordered to complete a camp program, generally ranging from five to nine months. They are approximately 60 percent Hispanic, 40 percent African American, and almost 90 percent male, and their average age is 17. The partnership is collecting data on 73 youth and young adults to evaluate program outcomes.

Goals and objectives

During the Young Adult Diversion Technical Assistance initiative, the partnership has focused on improving education and workforce outcomes for youth and young adults while in Camp Community Placement and when released back into the community. Specific goals include the following:

- Increase youth and young adult education outcomes, including school enrollment, attendance, and high school graduation or equivalency.
- Increase youth and young adult employment outcomes, including referrals to workforce development agencies and employment.

Partnership

The partnership is led by California State University, Los Angeles, Charter College of Education, a nationally recognized urban school of education committed to community-engaged collaboration. The partnership includes the following:

- Los Angeles County Probation Department: The largest probation agency in the United States, the department operates 50 facilities and supervises 12,000 parolees and more than 80,000 individuals on probation.
- Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE): LACOE is the largest regional education agency in the country. It supports the 80 school districts in the county and provides services to more than two million preschool and school-age children and youth.
- Los Angeles County Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services (WDACS): The agency provides career services and job training, supports older and dependent adults, and resolves conflicts and improves relations in the county.
- Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health (LACDMH): The largest county department of mental health in the United States, LACDMH provides services at 85 sites and in conjunction with schools, courts, and other organizations to over 250,000 individuals in the county.

The partnership meets on a monthly basis. The Probation Department, LACOE, and WDACS provide data for this project. California State University, Los Angeles faculty and doctoral student analyze the data.

During the technical assistance initiative, a memorandum of understanding between the Probation Department and WDACS was revised to better support the employment goals of youth and young adults transitioning from the juvenile camps to the community. Additionally, the workforce development agency has added staff, refined its referral system, and provided training for a more engaging connection and follow-up for youth and young adults who have transitioned back to the community to better ensure they are provided work experience and employment.

Accomplishments

In order to better support youth transitioning from the juvenile camps and facilitate communication with all agency partners, the partnership designed and revised flow charts related to youth education and employment outcomes. The most crucial changes include (1) the WDACS representative is identified before a youth's release from a juvenile camp to ensure immediate access to services in the community; (2) the Aftercare Probation Officer and the WDACS representative engage proactively before the youth's reintegration into the community; and (3) the aftercare probation officers and the WDACS representatives have joint training on a continuous basis to identify and reduce service barriers.

During a site visit, staff from the Los Angeles County Partnership learned strategies for providing employment services to justice-involved young adults. They learned about assessment, youth challenges and barriers, and strategies for working with formerly detained youth toward employment.

There has been increased collaboration among the Probation Department and WDACS. For instance, the two agencies collaboratively developed new processes, such as an automated referral system and tracking of referrals, to support youth in moving from the juvenile camps (operated by the Probation Department) to obtaining jobs.

The partnership set up a system to track and collect data on outcomes for youth and young adults after they leave the juvenile camps. The partnership tracked graduation rates of youth in camps and analyzed factors connected to graduation, such as special education eligibility, reading and math scores, race/ethnicity, and gender. It also analyzed employment outcomes.

Lessons Learned

- Ongoing data collection and analysis of youth and young adult work experience, program and training participation, and outcomes can help partners learn about areas for improvement to increase graduation and work outcomes.
- Youth and young adults transitioning from a juvenile camp to the community need to connect and engage before release with a well-trained WDACS representative who will work with them in the community.
- Partner agencies who have a goal for youth employment should agree on common employment expectations and specific outcomes.

More youth in the camps are participating in personal enrichment training (a prerequisite to subsidized work experience) as a result of the changes in the flowchart and increased funding for the WDACS allowing more youth to be served.

Next steps

California State University, Los Angeles, will interview agency partners to determine key understandings and outcomes from the collaboration. WDACS will add language in its agreement with the Probation Department that it will make every effort to secure full- or part-time employment for every youth on community probation. The Probation Department will continue collaborating with the local Los Angeles County America's Job Center of California and would like to expand services to families and youth. LACOE will work with partners (e.g., California State University, Los Angeles mathematics students) on improving the mathematics skills of youth/young adults in the Los Angeles County juvenile camps.

New York State

The New York State Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (DDPC) and the New York State Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) established an interagency juvenile justice work group to engage state-level, cross-systems partners in addressing the needs of justice-involved youth and young adults with intellectual, developmental, and other disabilities. The work group aims to establish a clearinghouse for organization-specific assessments and resources to build its own capacity to be more responsive to youth and young adults with disabilities, with a focus on youth and young adults (ages 14–24) who have demonstrated risk factors but who may or may not be formally assessed as having a disability.

Goals and objectives

The partnership joined the Young Adult Diversion Technical Assistance initiative with the following goals:

- Decide on the target population for both community and school contexts.
- Develop recommendations for best practices in system-mapping strategies for school districts, community-based organizations, law enforcement departments, service providers, and any other organizations that may interface with the population.
- Catalog viable response models in a central location.
- Develop organization-specific tool kits to support entities to build their own capacity to better support the target population.
- Disseminate the website and resources statewide.

Partnership

The partnership is led by two New York state agencies: DDPC and DCJS. DDPC supports people with intellectual and developmental disabilities through advocacy, systems change, and capacity building. The DCJS works to provide resources and services to criminal justice partners in the state to improve public safety. Other work group partners include the following:

- New York State Office of Children and Family Services: The agency provides programs and support to improve family support, juvenile justice, child care, and child welfare services in the state.
- New York State Office of Mental Health: The office manages psychiatric centers and oversees mental health programs in the state, serving over 700,000 individuals a year.
- New York State Office for People with Developmental Disabilities: The office coordinates services for individuals with developmental disabilities through a network of 600 local service providers.

- New York State Department of Labor: The department enforces labor law, administers employment benefits, and connects employers and job seekers. The department offers career services through state career centers.
- New York State Unified Court System: The system governs all state courts, including criminal, civil, family, and the state supreme court.
- New York State Department of Education: Part of the University of the State of New York, the department provides leadership for prekindergarten through 12th-grade education, higher education, cultural education, and adult and continuing education.
- New York State Council on Children and Families: Established in 1977, the council works to improve collaboration among state health, education, and human service agencies in order to improve services for children and families.
- New York State Youth Justice Institute: Housed at the State University at Albany, the institute is a collaboration among the university, the DCJS, and the state Office of Children and Family Services. The institute provides research, implementation support, and information to strengthen the capacity of local jurisdictions to use evidence-based practices.
- Representatives from school districts, technical assistance entities, and school associations.

Throughout the Young Adult Diversion Technical Assistance initiative, the partnership leadership met monthly and quarterly to ensure that cross-system needs were met. During the initiative, the partnership recognized the need to add the voices of local service providers to the work group. It added staff from local school districts, technical assistance providers, and school associations to develop systems and supports for young adults with disabilities.

Accomplishments

During the technical assistance initiative, the partnership succeeded in gathering an interdisciplinary team to have a dialogue, gain the commitment of participating organizations, and develop a plan with clear action steps that addresses the unique needs of young adults with disabilities and promotes more system responsiveness. As a result of this work, services for justice-involved youth and young adults have become more of a priority area in the state.

Next steps

The partnership plans to develop targeted online resources based on stakeholder feedback and build a process map for school- and community-based referrals and tracking young adults' movement throughout the system.

Lessons Learned

There are few resources for justice-involved youth and young adults with disabilities. For appropriate youth and young adult response, an in-depth assessment of service provider capacity will help improve intervention strategies and minimize pipeline risk.

There is no consistent, clear definition or way to identify youth and young adults with developmental disabilities across state agencies. A better approach is to target youth with any identified disability.

Ocean County, New Jersey

Located on the New Jersey shore in the central part of the state, Ocean County has a population of approximately 600,000. The largest industries in the area are health care, retail, and education. The Achievement Center at Ocean County College serves as the programming hub through which young adults are matched to career training, special education, college and work readiness, internship, positive youth development, mental health, and other wraparound support services. The partners are focusing on young adults ages 16 to 24 who are out of school and may not have a high school diploma. Most young adults served are unemployed and experience other risk factors for involvement with the criminal justice system, including mental health issues, homelessness, poverty, child abuse/neglect, and transportation challenges.

Goals and objectives

The partnership joined the Young Adult Diversion Technical Assistance initiative with the following goals:

- Expand and enhance partnerships.
- Strengthen planning, information sharing, and delivery processes among providers across the county to create a “no wrong door” referral network.
- Support staff development in best practices for justice-involved young adults.

Partnership

The partnership is led by the Achievement Center at Ocean County College—a two-year college that enrolls approximately 8,000 students a year and offers associate degrees and certificates in over 40 areas of study, as well as noncredit and continuing education programs. The Achievement Center is collaborating with

- Ocean County PIC: The county’s one-stop career center, Ocean County PIC offers career counseling, job training, and job search services in partnership with local organizations.
- Rutgers Transitional Education and Employment Management (T.E.E.M.) Gateway: Established in 1989, Rutgers T.E.E.M Gateway provides professional development to the partners of the Achievement Center on topics such as trauma-informed and nurtured-heart approaches for working with young adults. T.E.E.M. also offers classes for young adults on self-sustaining skills.
- Goodwill Helms Academy: In partnership with local community colleges and universities, the Academy offers free high school diploma preparation courses to young adults with the Achievement Center.

The strength of the partnership is the communication among its members and the flexibility of the lead organization. As circumstances have changed, the partners’ roles have changed. The lead organization is also focused on developing long-term relationships, which requires persistence, maintenance, and understanding.

Accomplishments

The partnership has instituted a range of services, supports, and opportunities for the young adult population at the Achievement Center. These include high school diploma preparation courses, a student-led newsletter, workshops on self-sustaining skills, resource fairs, and work-based learning opportunities at the center.

By networking with the other partnerships participating in the Young Adult Diversion Technical Assistance initiative, the partnership picked up new ideas that it plans to explore in the future, including developing a referral process from the juvenile facilities to the college and aligning the Achievement Center's services with other support services at the college. The partnership also learned the importance of continually seeking feedback and ideas from its students and using evidence-based practices, such as motivational interviewing and trauma-informed and nurtured-heart approaches (a set of strategies to assist youth with self-regulating their behavior).

Next steps

The partnership is pursuing several funding and technical assistance grants to support and expand its work, including developing a mentor training course at the college.

Lessons Learned

- Be flexible. Allow partners' roles to change as circumstances change.
- Stay focused on the long-term goals of the partnership.
- Communicate and be persistent.

Orange County, California

Located south of Los Angeles, Orange County has a population of approximately 3,185,000. The county includes the cities of Anaheim, Irvine, and La Habra. The largest industries are manufacturing, health care, and retail. Formed in response to the Young Adult Diversion Technical Assistance initiative, the Orange County Diversion Partnership builds on a foundation created by two preexisting collaboratives: the Orange County Re-Entry Partnership (OCREP) and the Orange County Local Partnership Agreement (OCLPA). OCREP is a strong collaboration of over 300 agencies and organizations that create linkages between the formerly incarcerated and community-based programs. The OCLPA is a team of over 45 agencies and 62 individuals. OCLPA programming efforts include the identification of resources, tools, services, and career development/educational options for youth and adults with disabilities. The partnership is focused on developing resources for justice-involved youth and young adults.

Goals and objectives

The partnership joined the initiative to increase awareness of diversion and career and technical education (CTE) issues and resources, access training on best practices, connect programs, and develop ways to fill gaps in services. With deep experience in reentry services and programs, the partnership hoped to expand into options for diversion. Its goals include the following:

1. Better connect workforce development, education, government, and community-based organizations by creating a directory of services for justice-involved youth.
2. Expand CTE services to a diversion/probation population, more directly involving employers and connecting justice-involved youth with disabilities to career pathways.
3. Better understand the intersection of special education and juvenile justice, especially as youth transition from school age to adulthood.
4. Explore options to improve information sharing and disseminating information to the community.

Partnership

The large partnership is led by the Orange County Development Board (OCDB) in collaboration with the following groups:

- California Department of Rehabilitation: A state agency, the department provides services and advocacy for individuals with disabilities.
- Orange County Department of Education (OCDE): The department provides support and fiscal oversight for 27 school districts in the county.
 - College and Career Preparatory Academy: An alternative high school managed by the OCDE supports students in earning a high school degree or equivalency
- Local school districts:
 - Irvine Unified School District
 - Santa Ana Unified School District

- State Council on Developmental Disabilities (SCDD), Orange County: Established by federal and state legislation, the SCDD works to increase services for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.
- OCREP: Over 300 agencies and organizations in this collaborative link community resource providers and formerly incarcerated individuals.
- Orange County Sheriff-Coroner Department: This law enforcement agency serves the county and operates three jail facilities.
- Orange County Probation Department: The department assists the county court system and supervises 23,000 adult and juvenile individuals on court-ordered probation or diversion.
- Project Kinship (Santa Ana): A nonprofit organization, Project Kinship provides support and training to individuals impacted by incarceration, gangs, and violence.
- Hope Builders: This nonprofit organization provides life skills and job training to disadvantaged youth in Orange County.
- City of La Habra: La Habra is located in the northwest corner of the county.
- Easterseals Southern California: Easterseals provides services, education, outreach, and advocacy for individuals with disabilities and their families.
- CAPromise: Led by the California Department of Rehabilitation, in partnership with other state agencies, local educational agencies, and the Interwork Institute at San Diego State University, CAPromise provides coordinated services to Supplemental Social Service Income recipients ages 14–16 and their families.
- North Orange County Regional Consortium for Adult Education: Established by state legislation in 2014, this consortium of community colleges, local education agencies, and community partners works to improve and expand adult education in North Orange County.
- Project Youth Orange County Bar Association: A nonprofit organization, Project Youth provides integrated prevention and intervention services to address youth crime, teen pregnancy, substance abuse, and barriers to education and health.
- Regional Center of Orange County: This nonprofit organization is funded by the state of California to coordinate services and supports for individuals with developmental disabilities and their families.
- Orange County Transition Initiative: In this collaboration, the Thompson Policy Institute on Disability and Autism at Chapman University, the OCDE, the Regional Center for Orange County, and the Center for Autism and Neurodevelopmental Disorders work together to improve employment, housing, and other transition outcomes for youth and adults with disabilities.

The two existing collaboratives (OCREP and OCLPA) began working together through their common involvement in OCREP’s juvenile reentry subcommittee that was formed to address the needs of the young adult population. This group had already started to meet monthly when the Young Adult Diversion Technical Assistance initiative began. Approximately one year into the initiative, the individual who was serving as lead left the OCDB. Two individuals from OCDB continued to participate in coaching calls and attended the second convening. The partnership struggled when there was turnover in leadership on both OCREP and the juvenile reentry subcommittee. The OCREP position has since been filled, and that collaborative has been focused more on young adults than juveniles, so the juvenile reentry subcommittee has not been reestablished. With the onset of the

COVID-19 pandemic, OCDB has been less focused on the diversion initiative, and its young adult activities have been more targeted toward reentry and working inside facilities.

Accomplishments

The partnership created a website (<https://sites.google.com/view/ocyadiversion>) and a draft resource directory of agencies that provide services to justice-involved young adults and is considering next steps and plans for maintaining the directory. Additionally, the partnership received a two-day training focused on CTE case-management strategies. As a result of participating in the technical assistance initiative, the partnership has reported an increase in collaboration and awareness of resources available for justice-involved individuals in Orange County.

Next steps

Moving forward, the partnership will focus on determining its needs post COVID and whether young adult diversion is still a priority.

Lessons Learned

Staff turnover and competing priorities can make it challenging to get buy-in from partner agencies that provide services to justice-involved young adults.

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Located in southeastern Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, is a city of 1.58 million people. The largest industries in the city are health care, education, and retail. The Enhancing Young Adult Diversion Through Workforce Development Partnership is a collaboration of city agencies, courts, and nonprofit organizations committed to supporting justice-involved young adults through strategic planning, professional development, program enhancements, and partnership development.

Goals and objectives

The partnership's objective is to improve health, social, and economic outcomes for Philadelphia Treatment Court participants who are 18 to 24 years old by strengthening workforce development services. Specific goals include the following:

- Enhance diversion program offerings to also include CTE and workforce development services, with a focus on the young adult population.
- Strengthen collaboration with CTE and workforce development service providers and educational entities.
- Develop a formal system to match the needs and career interests of program participants with the most appropriate services.
- Track participant outcomes to evaluate program success and make improvements over time.

Partnership

The partnership is led by the Philadelphia District Attorney's office in collaboration with the following groups:

- The First Judicial District Court of Pennsylvania—Municipal Court: The municipal court has three divisions: criminal, civil, and traffic. The criminal division hears trials for misdemeanor cases.
- Philadelphia Health Management Corporation (PHMC): Established in 1972, the PHMC is a nonprofit public health organization that operates 70 locations and 350 programs in the Philadelphia area.
- Defender Association of Philadelphia: The association's attorneys represent individuals in adult and juvenile courts in collaboration with social workers, paralegals, mitigation specialists, and investigators.
- Philadelphia Managing Director's Office: The office provides oversight and coordination among the different departments in the city, and oversees many public service programs.

Accomplishments

The partnership hired a vocational education coordinator to integrate training and workforce development services for participants in a treatment court by providing case management, career-readiness assessments, and connections to training and employment services. Thirty young adults completed career assessments, and 22 of these received referrals to training or employment services. The partnership recently lost funding for this position, but the experience has shown the value of integrating career training and workforce development services into the treatment court. The partnership plans to identify new ways to provide these services. Additionally, the partnership developed a data collection plan, resulting in an increased capacity to collect and use data.

Next steps

Moving forward, the partnership is focusing on building sustainable supports for justice-involved young adults and improving the work of the partnership. It will also reassess the staffing model and service provision in light of COVID-19 impacts.

Lessons Learned

Treatment court programs focused heavily on stabilization and treatment, but there is room for a concurrent focus on education and workforce development, even at the early stages of the recovery process. Having conversations early in the process helps participants later when they are ready to start looking at education and training possibilities.

Portland, Oregon

Portland, Oregon has a population of approximately 650,000. The main industries in the area are health care, professional, scientific, and technical services, and retail. The Community Healing Initiative (CHI) is an 8-year-old partnership between Portland Opportunities Industrialization Center and Rosemary Anderson High School (POIC + RAHS) and the Multnomah County Department of Community Justice that provides a range of services for young adults in diversion, probation, education, and workforce development services in Oregon.

Goals and objectives

The partnership joined the Young Adult Diversion Technical Assistance initiative to improve its workforce development programs and special education services. Its goals include the following:

- Engage in a “deep dive” into research and best practices in the field.
- Improve the outcomes of career and technical education and workforce development programs to ensure that programs are appropriately meeting the needs of young adults.
- Improve data sharing between programs through improving tracking outcome measures to monitor and improve programs.
- Improve special education services for students with disabilities.
- Work to engage employers in a formal training process to support pathways to employment and the hiring of young adult participants.

Partnership

The partnership is a collaboration between POIC + RAHS and the Multnomah County Department of Community Justice. A community-based nonprofit organization, POIC + RAHS manages three alternative high schools in the Portland area and a Work Opportunity Training and Transitions program that provides mentoring, workforce training, and apprenticeships to students from high school through age 25, in addition to the CHI program. The Multnomah County Department of Community Justice provides supervision and treatment to youth, adults, and families. The department supervises over 13,000 adults on probation or after prison release and operates a juvenile detention facility.

CHI was a well-established partnership before joining the Young Adult Diversion Technical Assistance initiative; however, it has had to adapt to staff changes. The program manager at POIC + RAHS left during the technical assistance initiative, and it has had to bring a new person up to speed to manage the work. Additionally, the partnership developed a logic model to guide its work. This logic model creates a shared vision of the work across the partnership with shared values and outcome measures to guide strategic decision-making. By creating the logic model, the partnership was able to have important strategic conversations and established a tool to return to when implementing new programming to ensure it is working toward the identified goals.

Accomplishments

The partnership has developed a more intentional focus on providing special education services to young adults in the probation program. It has conducted trainings on parent involvement in individualized education programs (IEPs). Many more justice-involved young adults in the program have IEPs now.

The partnership has also established connections with local employers and is developing an employer training strategic workplan to support employers in working with justice-involved young adults. The plan will include guidance on issues related to supervision, trainings, and ways of advocating for this population.

Next steps

The partnership is working on formalizing the employer training workplan. It will also further engage with subject matter experts on supports in workforce development programs for young adults with special education needs and formalize the partnership's data-sharing agreement.

Lessons Learned

Meeting the distinct needs of a justice-involved population involves specialized training and supports for the partnership and staff working with young adults.

Identifying clear outcome measures and guidelines helps to improve the work of the partnership in meeting the comprehensive needs of the young adults it serves.

Reno, Nevada

Reno is located in northwest Nevada. The surrounding county, Washoe, has a population of approximately 425,000. The largest industries in the area are health care, retail, and manufacturing. Led by Truckee Meadows Community College (TMCC), the Washoe County Diversion Partnership existed before its involvement in the Young Adult Diversion Technical Assistance initiative. However, the collaborative historically served more as a communication network more than a formal partnership. TMCC operates a reentry CTE program that includes diversion and other services for justice-involved young adults. The partnership targets its services toward justice-involved young adults ages 18 to 25.

Goals and objectives

The partnership identified the following goals:

- Establish clearer roles and responsibilities among the multiple partners that provide CTE services.
- Expand diversion coverage to other courts, and work directly with probation and parole.
- Identify or develop new funding resources.
- Develop a centralized system for case management and data sharing.

Partnership

TMCC serves as the lead and is the primary connection point between partners. The partnership includes the following groups:

- Washoe County Sheriff's Office: The sheriff's office provides law enforcement for the county and operates an adult detention facility.
- Department of Public Safety, Division of Parole and Probation: The department provides law enforcement and community correctional services—drug testing and counseling, mental health services, and employment and educational placement—to protect the community and reduce crime.
- Nevada Department of Corrections: The department operates seven correctional facilities, 10 conservation camps, and two transitional housing facilities in the state.
- Community Services Agency: A nonprofit organization, the agency provides human services, economic development, education, and housing services to individuals and families in northern Nevada.
- Nevada Department of Employment, Training, and Rehabilitation: This state workforce development agency offers job placement and training, vocational rehabilitation services, and labor market data.
- State of Nevada Department of Health and Human Services: The department manages and provides aging and disability services, child and family services, public and behavioral health, and welfare and supportive services.

- Western Nevada College: A public college located in Carson City, Western Nevada College has additional campuses and instruction centers in western Nevada and operates degree programs within correctional institutions.

Over the course of the initiative, there has been turnover in leadership in nearly every partner agency, but the primary contact from TMCC has been involved the whole time and has continued to engage other partners in this work. The partnership has grown and evolved rapidly since joining the technical assistance initiative. It has added new partners, including the social services agency, other colleges, and the state department of health and human services.

Accomplishments

The partnership has secured support for its work from policymakers—including the governor and the state legislature—to provide workforce development services to justice-involved young adults. The partnership has also expanded its work to reach more justice-involved young adults through new collaboration with other community colleges, a juvenile detention facility, and community service agencies. Additionally, as result of participating in the technical assistance initiative, the partnership has developed increased cooperation. For example, the partnership lead brought a staff member from the state probation and parole agency to the convening. The probation and parole agency representative learned more about diversion, met other participants from public safety agencies, and participated in table discussions to identify strategies, resulting in better communication and increased referrals. The partnership also developed a centralized tracking system as part of its implementation of the Getting Ahead in a Just Gettin' by World program—a series of workshops intended to help individuals move out of poverty.

Next steps

The partnership will focus on developing a guide to available resources. It will also attend a virtual cross-partnership training on motivational interviewing.

Lessons Learned

Convenings offer good opportunities to engage and collaborate with partners as well as to learn from other partnerships.

Staff turnover at partner agencies can present a challenge to partnerships. It can result in the need to devote additional time to bring new staff up to speed and get their buy-in.

Young adults in diversion programs are a difficult population to provide education and workforce development services to. This population requires more supports than education and workforce development groups can provide, such as housing.

Tuscaloosa, Alabama

Located in western Alabama and home to the University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa has a population of 100,287. The largest industries in the area are education, health care, and manufacturing. The Tuscaloosa diversion partnership was new at the beginning of the Young Adult Diversion Technical Assistance initiative, starting as a loose conglomeration of partners who are interested in working together to improve the local environment for diversion services. The partnership was established to coordinate three types of diversion programs: informal education-based programs, referrals through juvenile court, and referrals through adult court. The partnership is focused on youth between 16 and 24 with needs not addressed by current services.

Goals and objectives

Over the course of the initiative, the partnership identified several potential areas of focus, including resources for at-risk girls and women (eventually championed by the district attorney's office), the creation of transitional housing for high-risk youth being released from juvenile incarceration (also eventually transitioned to the district attorney's office), and the development of a directory of services in Tuscaloosa. The partnership identified the following goals:

- Increase partnership development, communication, and planning.
- Identify best practices for young adults.
- Identify funding for specific types of services.
- Garner support from the state legislature for diversion funding.

Partnership

The partnership is led by the Alabama Disabilities Advocacy Program (ADAP) at the University of Alabama. ADAP is part of the federally mandated protection and advocacy system and provides legal services to individuals with disabilities in the state. Other partners include the following:

- University of Alabama, Department of Social Work, Working on Womanhood (WOW) program: WOW provides services to justice-involved adolescent females (ages 13–18) with a history of mental-health-related issues, in collaboration with the Alabama Department of Youth Services.
- Justice system partners:
 - Tuscaloosa Juvenile Court and Probation
 - Tuscaloosa Adult Court
 - Tuscaloosa District Attorney's Office
- The Chamber of Commerce of West Alabama: The chamber supports economic and workforce development in Tuscaloosa and neighboring counties in west Alabama.
- Tuscaloosa County Commission: The commission comprises four elected officials responsible for administering county government.

- Service providers:
 - Indian Rivers Behavioral Health: A nonprofit organization, Indian Rivers provides treatment and support for individuals with mental health and/or substance abuse issues as well as intellectual disabilities.
 - Bradford Health Services: This service provides alcohol and drug addiction treatment services to teens, young adults, and adults in multiple locations in Alabama.
 - The Bridge, Inc: The Bridge is an addiction treatment center that specializes in services for adolescents.
 - Tuscaloosa One Place: This nonprofit organization provides a variety of services and resources, including after-school and child development, family and parenting, career and personal development, and teen intervention and support.
 - Shelton State Community College: A two-year college located in Tuscaloosa, Shelton State offers academic, technical, high school, and workforce development programs.
 - Stillman College: Stillman College is a liberal arts college located in Tuscaloosa.

The partnership began with a listserv for communicating with partners. During the initiative, two individuals were primarily involved from ADAP and the district attorney’s office. They attended each convening and participated in coaching meetings. These two individuals brought in other partners as needed.

Accomplishments

Partner agencies made progress in developing programs for justice-involved young adults. The partnership explored the possibility of creating a directory of resources, programs, and services for at-risk girls and women. After it discovered how few programs were available, the Tuscaloosa District Attorney’s Office agreed to focus on identifying and developing programs and services for this population. The district attorney’s office also began plans for transitional housing for young adults referred from juvenile court. Tuscaloosa One Place developed a workforce development and GED program for young adults.

Additionally, the partnership developed a resource directory app—the Tuscaloosa Juvenile Resource Locator. The resource directory supports young adults in finding local and statewide mental health, workforce development, housing, substance abuse, and residential treatment services.

The partnership also received a grant to expand its work into Bibb and Pickens counties.

Next steps

The partnership will focus on marketing the Tuscaloosa Juvenile Resource Locator and maintaining the services listed in the directory.

Lessons Learned

A loose conglomeration of partners can be difficult to engage. It could be helpful to have a formal kickoff meeting to engage all partners in intentional brainstorming about areas of focus. This type of meeting might help to get all partners involved and invested in young adult diversion possibilities.

