

REENTRY STARTS HERE

A Guide for Youth in Long-Term Juvenile
Corrections and Treatment Programs



Office of Juvenile Justice
and Delinquency Prevention

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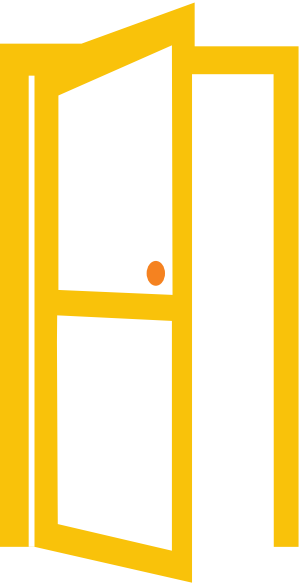
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Foreword

This toolkit, *Reentry Starts Here: A Guide for Youth in Long-Term Juvenile Corrections and Treatment Programs*, was developed as a resource to help young people in juvenile corrections and treatment programs prepare for reentry and success in the community.

According to OJJDP's Statistical Briefing Book, each year there are more than 48,043 youth in placement on any given day. Each of you will eventually be released back into the community and will have an opportunity to move forward with your lives in a positive direction.

The purpose of this guide is to encourage you to begin thinking and planning for success at the earliest point possible while in placement. As such, the guide is organized into two sections: (1) planning for reentry while in placement and (2) successful reentry into your community.

The resources provided in this guide speak to common barriers that you may experience upon reentry; they include action steps you can take to address those barriers with the help of a caring adult. Each day is an opportunity to take a step in the right direction, and I hope that you find this guide useful in determining where to begin and how to succeed on the path to achieving your life's goals.

Wishing you success,



Caren Harp

Administrator

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

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REENTRY STARTS HERE

A Guide for Youth in Long-Term Juvenile Corrections and Treatment Programs

Introduction

Your return to your community, or “reentry,” is a chance for you to make a new start. Your situation is temporary, and you will return to your family and community. From the first days that you are in placement, you should start to think about your release. This booklet, *Reentry Starts Here: A Guide for Youth in Long-Term Juvenile Corrections and Treatment Programs*, was created to help you through this important transition, with assistance from a parent, guardian, mentor, supportive friend, teacher, facility staff, or community agency staff.

The best way to succeed in reentry is to make a plan and do your best to stick to it. This guide is divided into two sections—one to help you prepare for reentry while you are still in placement, and another to help you transition back into your community once you are released. Reentry may be difficult, so it is important for you to seek help from supportive people who have your best interests at heart.



PART 1: Planning for Reentry

Reentry or transition planning is about starting on the day that you enter placement to prepare for the day that you leave the facility. This section will help you find out what you need to know to prepare for reentry.

Building Your Reentry Team

You will need a team of people to help you plan for reentry. This team may include a reentry or transition coordinator or case manager, your parent or guardian, a



mentor, facility staff, an educator, physical and mental health professionals, housing providers, a lawyer, and other key people in the community.

Working with your team to develop your reentry plan

Your team's job is to help you create a reentry plan and work toward it. The plan starts while you're in placement and may change a few times as you get closer to release. It should include your goals and the steps you need to take to reach those goals. Make a list of your goals with your reentry team—for example, you may want to get a high school diploma, be financially independent, or get a job in a field you're interested in. A specific staff member may be assigned to help you develop your reentry plan. This person is sometimes called a reentry or transition coordinator, or it could be your probation or parole officer.

Getting help from a lawyer

Even though you are in placement, you have a right to talk with your lawyer. A lawyer may be able to help you plan where you will live or go to school, get medical care, get a state ID, and find other helpful services after you are released. You may contact the lawyer who represented you in court, but that lawyer may not be available to help you with reentry. If that lawyer cannot help you, ask your family or your reentry coordinator to help you find another lawyer who can help with reentry. Start talking with your lawyer about your plans for reentry as early as possible. Let your lawyer know about what you have done well and what you want to do when you are released. Your lawyer can also help you figure out if and when your juvenile record can be sealed or expunged. See page 15 for more information about sealing or expunging your record.

Finding a mentor

Young people who have the help of a caring, trusted adult are often more successful in reentry. This person can act as a mentor—someone who believes in you and encourages you to do your best, not someone who just makes you follow the rules or who always agrees with you. In addition to your probation or parole officer, lawyer, parent, or guardian, you should look for a mentor who can share his or her wisdom with you, but also listen to you and keep your conversations confidential. Think about

who would be the best mentor for you and how to reach out to that person. Ask your reentry coordinator or other facility staff if there is a mentoring program you can access through the facility, or visit www.mentoring.org/get-involved/find-a-mentor to find a mentor in your community.

Communicating with your family

Having regular contact with your family while you're in placement can help you be more successful after your release. Family may include your parents, grandparents, siblings, caregivers, or other supportive adults you trust. Whether you communicate in person, on the phone, or through other technology, your family can be an important source of support. Tell them about your experiences in placement and the challenges you are facing. Discuss your plans for reentry together. Supportive family members or guardians can help you navigate the challenges of transitioning back to your home, including reconnecting to school and understanding and adhering to probation/parole requirements and your aftercare plan.

Connecting to the Support You Need

While you're in placement, you have access to different types of support and services that will help lay the foundation for your health and well-being after your release.

Participating in recommended mental health care and finding a community-based counselor

It's not unusual for young people to feel worried, stressed, or sad. It can be helpful to talk to a counselor or doctor if you are feeling that way a lot. The facility staff should be able to connect you with a counselor or doctor to talk with while you are in placement. You have a right to ask questions about your mental health and let the staff know what you think is best for you. Understanding the type of treatment you need and participating in that treatment are your first steps toward being healthy.

About 3 months before your release, ask your facility counselor to connect you to a counselor in the community whom you can begin to see while you're still in placement. This will give you time to build a relationship with a new counselor before your release.



Part of the plan you make with your reentry team should be to continue building on your successes in treatment and make sure there are no gaps in your counseling at your release. Ask for help if you need it, and have your treatment records sent to your counselor in the community when you are released. Depending on what state you're in, your parent or legal guardian may need to sign a form to send your information to the community-based provider. To make sure that you are able to continue seeing a counselor or doctor after you return to your community, you should talk with your lawyer, case manager, or facility staff about how to get your Medicaid or health insurance reinstated, and what you need to do to get a state ID. Most doctors' offices require you to show an ID before they will provide treatment.

Addressing medical and dental health concerns

Staff at your facility may conduct medical and dental exams. You have a right to find out the results of these exams. Any medical or dental treatment that you need should be available while you are in placement and should also be part of your reentry plan. As with your mental health information, make sure that results of all medical or dental assessments go with you to your doctor and dentist in the community. Your parent or legal guardian may need to give written permission for those records to be sent to your doctor and dentist. If you already have a family doctor or dentist, work with your reentry team to make sure you return to those health care providers once you are released.

Figuring out where you will live

Make sure to get help from your reentry team and start thinking as soon as possible about where you will live when you are released. You may be able to return to the home you were in before placement, but if that is not possible, your reentry team should help you locate and ensure a smooth transition to a supportive place to live. For example, an aunt, uncle, grandparent, godparent, or foster care may be available to provide a safe and stable home. Having a stable place to live when you leave placement is really important so that you can focus on school, a job, and staying safe. If you're 18 years old or older, you and your reentry team may decide that independent living is best for you.

Planning Ahead for School and Work

You may be able to focus on your education and prepare for employment while you are still in placement.

Continuing your education in placement

Work with the teachers at the facility to set education goals. Write down the steps you need to take to obtain a high school diploma, GED, college degree, or other certification. Be sure to attend classes provided at the facility. If you were receiving special education services at your home school, you are entitled to receive those services in your facility. Ask the facility school staff to help you learn more about what kind of student you are, your learning style, and how to succeed when you return to school in the community. They can teach you school success skills such as how to be better organized, how to manage your time, and how to study.

Transitioning back to your local school

As you get closer to your release, know that your education record from the facility will need to be shared with your local school. You can work with your reentry team to make sure that your education record is transferred. If you should become homeless at any time during your reentry process, federal law requires school districts to allow you to enroll in school immediately so that you can stabilize your education while you and your family search for appropriate housing.

Preparing to attend college

If you plan to attend college when you are released, the facility school staff can help you complete applications and financial aid forms. You can receive federal financial aid even if you have a juvenile record. To apply for a federal student loan to help pay for college, you need to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). You may also consider federal Pell Grants, which are available to students who are working toward their first undergraduate or graduate degree, and are based on individual need.



Developing your job skills

You don't have to wait until you're released to start thinking about where you'd like to work or to start becoming more qualified for the position you're interested in. With help from facility staff, you can learn job search skills like writing résumés, finding job listings, completing applications, and interviewing. Some long-term juvenile corrections and treatment facilities offer career and technical certification programs. Complete as many certificate programs as you are interested in and able to while you are in placement—it can be expensive to complete them after you are released. With these certificates in hand, you'll have more employment options once you're released.

Understanding the Rules of Community Supervision and Your Aftercare Plan

Before your release, make sure you understand what the juvenile court judge expects of you. When you leave the facility you are in, you will probably have to follow a probation order or parole agreement. The agreement might require you to attend school, do community service, pay restitution or other costs, follow a curfew, take random drug tests, continue community-based mental health or drug treatment services, and/or take certain medications as prescribed. You can ask your lawyer, transition coordinator, or probation or parole officer for a copy of the order agreement. Ask your lawyer to explain the order/agreement to you so that you know what the judge is requiring you to do.

You may also leave placement with what is called an “aftercare plan” to make sure that you get the services and support you need once you're out. The aftercare plan is something that your reentry coordinator would develop before you leave placement. You should be involved in putting that plan together with your reentry coordinator. Your aftercare plan might include counseling, education services, or job skills training, and it involves having someone to check in on you, such as a case manager or transition coordinator. Before your release, make sure you understand the rules and details of your aftercare plan and contact your reentry coordinator if you have any questions.



PART 2: Returning to Your Community

Whether you are being released after a few months or years in placement, staff members in the facility have created your schedule and told you when to get up and when to go to school. You will have more independence when you're back in your community. The sooner you get started with working toward your goals, the more success you will have. If you think you're not doing as well as you want to be doing, talk to your lawyer, case manager or transition coordinator, parent, guardian, mentor, or another caring adult as soon as possible to get help.

Using the Services Available to You

It's important to know where to get help when you're released.

Managing your living situation

The challenges of reentry can become even more difficult if you do not have stable housing. If you find that you don't have a place to sleep at night, there are resources you can turn to for help. Many communities have a runaway and homeless youth program that can help youth who are experiencing homelessness. These programs can help you find a place to stay for one night, several nights, or even much longer. They may also be able to help you meet your education goals, get counseling, reconnect you with family, and provide other important services. If you're thinking about running away from home, talk with your lawyer or mentor, or call 1-800-RUNAWAY. These people and services may be able to help you understand the potential consequences of running away and help you fix the problems you would like to run away from.

Engaging with your mentor

A mentor can help you figure out how to manage some of the challenges you may face when you return to your community. If you don't yet have a mentor, visit www.mentoring.org/get-involved/find-a-mentor to find one in your community. Update your mentor on whatever you're feeling about being released, your time in placement, your accomplishments, and your plan for moving forward. Your mentor can support you in your daily life, school, and job search. Meet often with your mentor to help you with daily problem solving and to continue to revise your reentry plan. Try keeping notes between meetings so that you can remember things you want to discuss and what steps you need to take before your next meeting. Allowing your mentor to be a consistent presence in your life can help you stay away from drugs, attend school regularly, and prepare for success in the workplace.

Maintaining your mental, physical, and dental health

Taking care of yourself is a critical part of your success in reentry. Upon release, you may need to get your Medicaid or health insurance reinstated. Ask your parent, guardian, lawyer, probation or parole officer, or case manager to help make sure this is done as soon as you are released. In addition to seeing your doctor and dentist regularly, it is important to keep up with any mental health or substance use treatment. If you take any prescription medications, be sure to take them exactly as they are prescribed. Make sure that you have a supply of medications when you leave placement and that prescriptions have been transferred to your local pharmacy.

Participating in peer recovery support services

If you struggle with emotional, mental health, or substance use issues, strong social connections can strengthen your recovery and reentry. Youth who have a history of these issues have a unique capacity to support others in similar circumstances because of a deep understanding of their common experiences. People your own age who have similar life experiences as you and who have insights to share about their experiences can provide peer support and peer mentoring services. Peer recovery support services include peer mentoring or coaching, peer recovery groups, and peer community building. Ask your case manager or transition coordinator how you can get involved in peer recovery support services in your community.



Getting involved in your community

Getting involved in your community is a good way to structure your time, and it can be fun and rewarding. Explore local organizations where you might take classes or volunteer. Programs for youth offer many activities and classes, such as computer gaming, dancing, cooking, sports activities, community outings, arts, music, and certification programs after school, evenings, and weekends. These programs are usually free or available with a scholarship. Examples of organizations to check out are your local Boys and Girls Clubs, the YMCA or YWCA, and churches.



Registering With the Selective Service System

The law requires that all men in the United States between the ages of 18 and 26—with very few exceptions—register with the Selective Service System (SSS). The SSS is in place in the event that a national emergency requires a military draft. If you are a male between the ages of 18 and 26 when you are released from placement, you must register with the SSS within 30 days of your release to avoid facing penalties for not registering. Registering with the SSS does not mean that you will be drafted into the armed forces—it just means that your information is on file in case a military draft is necessary. For more information, visit www.sss.gov/Portals/0/Resources/JJT/Re_Entry_Infographic.pdf. To register with the SSS, visit www.sss.gov/Home/registration.

Making a List of Important Contacts

Even when you're back in the community, you'll still need help from other people to stay on track. It's important to have contact information readily available for the people and agencies that can support you during reentry. Use the list below as a starting point, and keep your contact list up to date. The list should include:

Your mentor: _____

Your probation/parole officer: _____

Your case worker or case manager: _____

Your counselor: _____

Your lawyer: _____

HOTLINES YOU MIGHT NEED

Local counseling hotline: _____

Local substance use/abuse hotline: _____

Local domestic violence shelter/hotline: _____

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255

National Drug and Alcohol Treatment Referral Routing Service: 1-800-662-HELP (4357)

National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)

Runaway Safeline: 1-800-RUNAWAY (786-2929)

Human Trafficking Hotline: 1-888-373-7888

USING SOCIAL MEDIA

When you're home and have access to a phone or computer, you probably have access to and may be a member of popular social media sites. Social media sites can be a great way to reconnect with your friends, learn, and share common interests. But it is important to use social media like Snapchat, Instagram, WhatsApp, Twitter, and Facebook with caution. Using social media can be risky for all youth, especially if it's not used in a healthy and responsible way. Be mindful of what you say and post on social media sites and communicate as if you were having a conversation with someone in person. Employers and colleges look at your online profiles, so only post what you would want them to see. Also, beware of people who are trying to use social media to harm you, such as bullies, sexual predators, and others. Whether it's someone you know or a complete stranger, be careful about who you connect with on social media.

PRIVACY

- Check your privacy settings on each social network site you use. Don't go public, especially with your location.
- Set your privacy setting to friends only—only people you know.
- Don't share your password.

FRIENDS

- Don't accept requests to join your network unless you know the person who is asking.
- Don't arrange in-person meetings with anyone you don't know.
- Don't engage in sexual conversations or post explicit pictures.
- Protect your phone number and address.

BULLYING

- Resist "impulse" posting, especially if you are upset about something.
- Don't engage in aggressive behavior online.
- Handle your friendship and relationship problems privately and offline.

Moving Beyond Your Experience in Placement

There are certain things you can do to move past your time in placement, helping both yourself and others.

Understanding record clearance

Your juvenile record can affect your future. Your juvenile record can make it harder for you to get a job, go back to or get into school, find a place to live or stay in your current home, join the military, or just move on with your life. Therefore, it is important for you to get your record cleared, if at all possible.

Most states provide an opportunity for people to clear some or all of the following from their juvenile record: police reports, fingerprints, photographs, parole reports, court records, and juvenile detention records. Some states allow you to seal your record, which would hide it from the public. Other states allow you to expunge your record, which would delete it or put it aside where no one can access it except with permission from the judge. Your state may use the term “sealing,” “expunging,” “deletion,” “destruction,” or “expunction.” These are all words that describe ways in which your record can be shielded from the public and help you avoid some long-term consequences.

Because the process to get a juvenile record cleared is different in each state, you should contact your lawyer or local public defender’s office to find out what you need to do to get your juvenile record cleared.

You may also contact the National Juvenile Defender Center to get information about who may be able to assist you in clearing your juvenile record. Their email address is inquiries@njdc.info and their phone number is 202-452-0010.

Using your experience to help others

You have knowledge and experiences that can help others. Consider telling your story to help other youth make better choices. Think about becoming part of a peer support or peer mentoring group. Peer support and peer mentoring are services provided by people who have common life experiences with the people they serve. For example, a youth who has experience in the juvenile justice system can share his or her knowledge with other youth in similar situations. By sharing their experiences, peers



can bring hope to youth in the system and promote a sense of belonging within the community. Talk to your case manager or transition coordinator if you're interested in becoming a peer mentor.

Following Probation, Parole, and Court Requirements

When you're released, be sure to review all of the requirements and conditions of your probation order or parole agreement with someone who can explain the conditions of release. If you have any questions, ask your lawyer or probation or parole officer. You need to know if there are rules about your school attendance or restrictions on where you can go, whom you can interact with, and how late you can stay out. You don't want to violate your probation order or parole agreement just because you didn't understand one of the rules.

Part of your probation order or parole agreement will involve reporting to your probation or parole officer. If you have a cell phone or smartphone, you can use your phone's calendar function to keep track of your appointments. If you don't have a



Keeping a File of Important Documents

As you work toward your reentry goals, it's going to be up to you to stay organized. Start a folder of important documents to bring with you to appointments with your probation or parole officer, community based service provider, and any court appearances you might have. Having these documents in one place will also help you stay on top of your health, your education goals, and your career goals:

- State-issued driver's license or identification card
- Social Security card
- Birth certificate
- Health records (including vaccinations, test results, x rays, and medication information)
- School records (including records of classes taken, grades, attendance records, and test scores)
- Probation or parole conditions
- Calendar
- Contact list

cell or smartphone, mark your appointments on a physical calendar. Get in the habit of putting new appointments on your calendar as you are making them. Missing an appointment with your probation or parole officer could mean that you have to appear before the juvenile court judge again. In some circumstances, the judge may even send you back to placement.

Keeping Up With School and Work

Completing school and getting a good job are two of the best ways to succeed after placement. It is important to try your best and ask for help.

Returning to school in the community

You will likely need assistance in the transition back to school, which can be challenging at first. Your local school usually needs a copy of the education records from the facility to give you credit for classes you took while in placement. Also, many schools will not let you reenroll until they have this paperwork. Get help from your lawyer, probation or parole officer, mentor, case manager, or transition coordinator if you have problems getting back into school, scheduling the right classes, or getting credit for the classes you took while in placement. If you are eligible for special education services, you should notify the school staff during your first meeting. The school should refer you to the office for special education services or to a staff person who can help with the enrollment process. Once you are enrolled in school, it's very important to attend all of your classes consistently. Regularly attending class is an important part of being in the community and getting an education, which can eventually help you get a job that pays well.

Meeting your education goals

Education is the key to getting a good job. Most career paths start with getting either a high school diploma or a GED. If your career goals require further education, you might consider enrolling in a community college, university, or technical school. College is expensive, but with research and planning, there may be resources to cover these costs. You may be eligible for financial aid, including federal Pell Grants, which were introduced on page 5. Visit <https://fafsa.ed.gov> to find more information about



financial aid. Ask your mentor, the high school counselor, or the college financial aid office for help applying for financial aid. Always check into scholarships, grants, and financial aid packages and try your best to avoid taking out high-interest student loans that you have to pay back after you graduate.

Getting a job

Keep in mind that if your juvenile record has not been sealed or expunged, your record could make it harder for you to get a job. Refer to page 15 for more information about juvenile record sealing or expungement. If you are still in school, think carefully about your job options. It is very difficult to work a full-time job and complete school at the same time. While you are working toward completing your longer term education and career goals, you might consider taking a part-time job. If you are a minor, there may be limits on how many hours you can work and how late at night you can work, or even if you can have a job at all.

When you're ready to look for a job, your school counselor, case manager, probation or parole officer, or mentor might be able to help you. You may also be able to receive assistance from your local American Job Center or One-Stop Career Center. These centers provide services to assist individuals in exploring career options and identifying skills required for a specific career, and may be able to provide information on training to support you in achieving your career goals. Visit www.careeronestop.org for more information.

Managing your money

Managing your money wisely ensures that you have a place to live, food to eat, basic clothes to wear, electricity, etc. If you spend too much money on video games, junk food, or expensive and excessive shoes and clothes, you may end up not being able to pay for your rent and groceries. As soon as you start earning income from a job, you will need to think about creating a budget and saving money. Visit www.mymoney.gov/Pages/for-youth.aspx for resources about money that are geared toward youth.

MOVING FORWARD

Every day in reentry is a new chance to start again. But the path to success is not a straight line. You will continue to encounter obstacles and setbacks, but that's part of life. The important thing is to return again and again to your goals and the strategies that work for you. Stay focused on your goals, be patient with yourself, and ask for help when you need it.



ARE YOU READY FOR REENTRY?

A POCKET
GUIDE FOR
YOUTH

Three questions to answer before your release

1. What are your goals for reentry?

Make a list of your goals in each area.

Education goals: _____

Career goals: _____

Health goals: _____

Family and relationship goals: _____

Financial goals: _____

Other goals: _____

2. What are you doing to prepare to meet your reentry goals?

Make a list of the things you're doing now—such as certificate programs, mental health counseling, and meeting with a mentor—that are setting you up for success in reentry.

3. Where are you going to live after you are released?

At least 3 months before your release, sit down with your reentry or transition coordinator to plan out your living situation. Use the following checklist to help guide the conversation you have with your reentry coordinator about housing.

Do you know who is picking you up from the facility on the day of your release?

YES NO

Notes: _____

Do you know who you're going to live with (if anyone)?

YES NO

Notes: _____

Do you know who to contact if you find that you don't have a place to sleep at night?

YES NO

Notes: _____

Three questions to answer after your release

1. Have you gathered your important documents together in a folder?

Check off the documents you have in a folder, and write down how you'll go about getting any documents that you didn't check off.

- State-issued driver's license or identification card
- Social Security card
- Birth certificate
- Health records
- Probation or parole conditions
- Calendar
- School records (see pages 5 and 17 of *Reentry Starts Here* for details on transitioning back to your school in the community)
- List of important contacts (see page 13 of *Reentry Starts Here* for more information)

Plan for getting missing documents (who to contact, where to go, etc.):

2. What keeps you motivated to follow the rules of community supervision and stay focused on your reentry goals?

Make a list of the people, strategies, and activities that are keeping you motivated and on task to follow the conditions of probation or parole and meet your goals.

People

Strategies

Activities

People	Strategies	Activities
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

3. Who will you talk to when you need help?

Work with your reentry or transition coordinator to come up with a list of names and contact information for the people or agencies you will reach out to if you need help in any of the following areas:

Housing

Name: _____

Phone number: _____

Email address: _____

Education

Name: _____

Phone number: _____

Email address: _____

Juvenile Record Expungement/Sealing

Name: _____

Phone number: _____

Email address: _____

Employment

Name: _____

Phone number: _____

Email address: _____

Physical Health

Name: _____

Phone number: _____

Email address: _____

Mental Health

Name: _____

Phone number: _____

Email address: _____

U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
*Office of Juvenile Justice and
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