

Maryland School Mental Health Alliance*
School Reentry
Information for School Clinicians

Upon release from a juvenile correctional facility, youth must reenroll or reenter the mainstream educational system. This can be a difficult transition period for both the youth and his or her family. The reentry process may be confusing and unclear. In addition, the problems that contributed to the youth's arrest, such as familial problems, often still exist.

Why do we care?

- Transition planning by mental health workers can be important to academic success. Planning has been shown to reduce recidivism by juvenile offenders.
- Many of the best practices for school reentry include the involvement of mental health providers in the transition process.
- Legislation in many states requires mental health workers to be involved in the transition planning process.
- Youth released from detention centers are often in need of mental health resources. The prevalence rate of mental illness, especially conduct disorder and substance abuse, are elevated in the juvenile offender population. Attention to the youth's mental health needs may help ensure a smooth transition into school.
- The transition into the independence associated with mainstream schools requires the youth to control disruptive behavior. Otherwise, the disruptive behavior may create problems resulting in the child's removal from school.
- Collaboration between the mental health system, the education system, and the justice system will help to create a stronger support network for the youth during this transition.
- The mental health system can be another avenue through which school reentry is ensured. Mental health workers can advocate for a smooth transitioning of the youth back into school.

What can we do about it?

- **Family counseling may be necessary to help rehabilitate the youth.** Many of the problems that contributed to their arrest, such as lack of parental monitoring, may still be present. There is evidence to suggest that certain family treatments (e.g. multisystemic therapy) can improve the youth's grades in school and also reduce the number of future arrests.
- **Collaborate with the justice and educational systems to help prevent youth from falling through the cracks.** An integrated approach will ensure that the appropriate steps are met in the reenrollment process.

Resources:

- **Just Children Legal Aid Justice Center** (November 2004) *A Summary of Best Practices in School Reentry for Incarcerated Youth Returning Home.*
<http://www.justice4all.org/files/Reenrollment%20--%2004%20Best%20Practices%20with%2006%20Preface.pdf>
- **OJJDP: Overcoming barriers to school reentry:**
www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/ojjdp/fs200403.pdf
- **The National Center on Education, Disability, and Juvenile justice:**
Transition plans: <http://www.edjj.org/focus/TransitionAfterCare/index.html>
- **National Evaluation and Technical Assistance Center for the Education of Children and Youth who are neglected, delinquent, or at risk.**
 - *Transition, reentry and aftercare:* <http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/nd/resources/library/transition.asp>
- **U.S. Department of Justice: Office of Justice Programs: Reentry.**
 - *Federal and national resources:*
<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/reentry/fnr/nr.html>

**Developed by the Center for School Mental Health (<http://csmh.umaryland.edu>) in collaboration with the Maryland School Mental Health Alliance.*