
VI. STAGE 4: AFTERCARE

INTRODUCTION

Transition does not end with a youth's release, as aftercare is the time when the youth re-enters the context from which he or she first came into detention. The need for effective aftercare services has been well documented.³¹ For instance, a longitudinal study by Bullis and colleagues followed 531 youth for 12 months after release from a facility.³² They found that youth who were engaged with work and school 6 and 12 months after release were less likely to return to the juvenile correctional system. Such results highlight the importance of aftercare services, especially engaging youth in school and/ or work upon release. As such, a plethora of supports needs to be in place as the youth adjusts to community and school life. The aftercare period of transition is *critical*.

WHAT WORKS AT THIS STAGE: INNOVATIVE PRACTICES

After a youth exits from incarceration and enters aftercare, many supports should be in place to facilitate his or her re-entry into the community. The transition specialist, coordinator, or whoever is in charge of the youth's transition plan must take all steps necessary to ensure that the youth is supported and monitored beyond the confines of an institution. Several innovative strategies can be put into place to better guarantee that the youth will not fall through the cracks after exit.

Strategy One: Provide Transitional Counseling

Within the first two weeks of release and enrollment into the youth's new school or employment setting, a **transitional counselor** from the juvenile justice facility should either call the youth or pay him or her a visit. This communication can help address any issues the youth is having in the new environment and help him or her stay connected with an adult until rapport is developed with adults in the new environment. Transitional counseling also ensures that the youth is on track with his or her goals and is following the plan established during exit from the facility.

Strategy Two: Ensure Follow-Up and Monitoring

Research shows that facility staff should maintain contact and **follow-up** with the youth for up to six months after release.³³ Two States have unique processes for **monitoring** youth after release. Pennsylvania assigns two parole officers to each youth—one for court activities and one based at the school the youth enters. The school-based probation officer oversees not only the youth's behavior but also the transition process. In Tennessee, community volunteers serve as parole officers in the field so that salaried officers can stay in the courts. Volunteers perform all the work in the field that the officers would normally do, increasing the parole officer-to-youth ratio across the State.

Strategy Three: Supply Wraparound Support Services

Aftercare is the time when “the rubber hits the road” and decisions are made about whether to continue support services that the youth has received during transition. The youth's **transition**

specialist and team should ensure that he or she receives **wraparound support services** that are individualized according to the youth’s strengths, challenges, and needs. These support services should view the youth in the context of his or her new environment, and be both comprehensive and coordinated among all the entities involved. Sound transition team management, including **role articulation and responsibility**, can facilitate the **delivery of these services in a planned and organized sequence**.

The National Wraparound Initiative has identified 10 principles of an effective wraparound program,³⁴ as described below.

1. Family voice and choice. Families and youth should be key team members whose input is solicited and prioritized throughout each phase of the transition process. Families should be able to make key decisions with the support and encouragement of the team.
2. Team based. A team of individuals, who are all committed to supporting the family through this process, should be identified.
3. Natural supports. When determining supports and services, the team should draw from family members’ networks of interpersonal and community relationships as much as possible. Such support is more often accessible to and sustainable for families.
4. Collaboration. Team members should share the responsibility of developing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating the wraparound plan.
5. Community based. Support services and strategies should be inclusive, responsive, accessible, and implemented in the least restrictive setting possible, in efforts to support the child’s integration back into their family and community.
6. Culturally competent. Wraparound services should be aligned with the values, preferences, beliefs, culture, and identity of the youth and family, as well as their community.
7. Individualized. A customized set of strategies, supports, and services should be developed and implemented that are customized to the individual youth.
8. Strengths based. The plan should build on the strengths of the youth and family.
9. Persistence. The team should work through challenges together until the goals of the wraparound plan have been accomplished.
10. Outcome based. The wraparound plan should include goals and objectives that are measurable and observable, and should ensure that progress is regularly monitored and data are used to inform plan revisions.

A model program, the **Intensive Aftercare Program (IAP)**, was previously funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) as an intensive, community-based aftercare research and demonstration project. IAP proposed five principles for effective aftercare programming:

1. Preparing youth for progressively increased responsibility and freedom in the community
2. Facilitating youth-community interaction and involvement
3. Working with both the offender and targeted community support systems (for example, families, peers, schools, and employers) on qualities needed for constructive interaction and the youth’s successful community adjustment
4. Developing new resources and supports where needed

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5. Monitoring and testing the youth and the community on their ability to deal with each other productively

A program that embodied these core principles was subsequently developed and piloted in three States. This pilot program was so well received that after the project ended in June 2000, a technical assistance and training program emerged, which established the **IAP Juvenile Reintegration and Aftercare Center**.^{bb}

A. PRACTICES SPECIFIC TO FOLLOWING UP ON RECORDS DURING AFTERCARE

Once a youth leaves the facility, follow-up data on educational outcomes should be collected on an ongoing basis. Collecting follow-up data allows State administrators and program managers to gain a better understanding of how effective the transition programming is in their State and/or district. It also gives parties at the State and local level information they need for improving transition policies and procedures. Not collecting follow-up data could make the evaluation of transition programming difficult and limit future improvements. The following strategy can be used by program managers when considering records transfer and follow-up procedures after a youth has left the system.

Strategy One: Collaborate and Communicate With Individuals and Agencies to Track Progress and Collect Follow-Up Data

Administrators and program managers should **identify and meet with collaborators** from other districts, schools, agencies (e.g., mental health), community partners, family members, and other parties. They should determine the procedures for collecting youth data after release and discuss steps to overcome any challenges that arise when trying to collect data. Also, **the timeframes** for collecting youth data post-release (e.g., 6 months, 12 months) and the type of information to be collected should be agreed on. Every effort should be made to **include the youth and his or her family** in this planning process, because depending on the State and/or district, their permission may be needed before follow-up data can be collected.

B. PRACTICES SPECIFIC TO FAMILY INVOLVEMENT DURING AFTERCARE

After a youth is released, the family needs to continue to receive long-term and enduring support to promote positive interaction with their child as they readjust back to the community.³⁵ Below are details on how this can be done.

Strategy One: Provide Continued Support to the Family

During the period of reintegration, it is important to **provide continued support to the family**. This may include the following:

- Clinical home visits that analyze the family living situation to best prepare the youth for eventual return

^{bb} See <http://www.csus.edu/ssis/cdcps/iap.htm> for more information. Also see <http://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojjdp/201800.pdf> for summaries of additional model programs.

- Participation in parent-to-parent support groups
- Participation in family and in parental counseling
- Family intervention and training services

NEXT STEPS

In the Appendices is a self-study tool specific to this stage of transition. The tool will help you gather applicable institutional data on your transition processes, determine your status in implementing key strategies, and plan next steps in program improvement efforts. Additionally, resources specific to this stage have been compiled as examples of how States are implementing the presented strategies. For each document presented below, the source, a Web site to access the document, and a brief description are provided. Resources to be used during aftercare include: a re-entry checklist developed by the National GAINS Center for Mental Health Services, a youth record developed by the Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators (CJCA), and an aftercare treatment plan.

Resources for Aftercare
Follow-Up and Tracking
<p>Re-Entry Checklist Source: National GAINS Center for Mental Health Services URL: http://gainscenter.samhsa.gov/swfs/Reentry_Checklist.swf Description: The National GAINS Center Re-entry Checklist tracks the services and supports that youth with mental health needs will need after release. It also tracks the steps that facility staff members have taken to assist them with these needs during incarceration.</p>
<p>Youth Record Source: Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators (CJCA) URL: http://pbstandards.org/DocLib/YouthRecord_%20October%202008.pdf Description: This form is used to collect and maintain information on youth after they have exited the facility. It allows facility staff to complete a comprehensive questionnaire on the youth, from entry to aftercare, based on the services they received during residency.</p>
Aftercare Treatment Plan
<p>Aftercare Treatment Plan (see Attachment A of this document) Source: South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice Office of Policy and Planning Reintegration Initiative URL: http://www.State.sc.us/djj/pdfs/Reintegration-Program-Manual.pdf Description: The aftercare treatment plan (starts on page A-1) is a tool for facility personnel to detail how the youth is to be supported and provided with services after release. It includes components such as areas of serious concern, family strengths and needs, personal goal-setting, and peer associations.</p>

If an agency, organization, or publisher wishes to suggest additional documents or resources for this Toolkit, it may submit a request to ndtac@air.org. NDTAC will review the information and consider it for inclusion in a future version of the Toolkit.