U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

Partnering With Youth and Families

A Best Practices Guide for Youth Justice Stakeholders

OJJDP

U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
810 Seventh Street NW.
Washington, DC 20531

Brent J. Cohen
Acting Assistant Attorney General

Liz Ryan
Administrator
Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention

Office of Justice Programs
Building Solutions | Supporting Communities | Advancing Justice
ojp.gov

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
Working for Youth Justice and Safety
ojjdp.ojp.gov

This publication was supported by contract order 15PJDP22F00000004 awarded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), Office of Justice Programs. The opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department of Justice.

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention is a program office within the Office of Justice Programs, which also includes the Bureau of Justice Assistance; the Bureau of Justice Statistics; the National Institute of Justice; the Office for Victims of Crime; and the Office of Sex Offender Sentencing, Monitoring, Apprehending, Registering, and Tracking.

Acknowledgments

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention would like to thank authors Sue Badeau and Tymber Hudson for their efforts on this guide. The authors also wanted to share messages of thanks to the people who provided insights and guidance during the development of this guide.

I would like to acknowledge and thank my family, particularly my two sons who experienced the youth justice system. We shared the journey together, learned together, lifted our voices together, and became stronger in the process. I thank Grace Bauer-Lubow and Bart Lubow for their wisdom, knowledge, and mentorship over the years. I also wish to thank all of the families and young people that I have had the opportunity to meet, get to know, and learn from over the years—they have all truly informed this paper.

In particular, as it relates to this guide, I would like to call out:

- Meri Viano, Taj Mullins, and the Parent Professional Advocacy League in Massachusetts
- Mark Rolon, Eddie Torres, and the Father Engagement Action Team in New Hampshire

- Debbie Willett and GrandFamily Connections in Chester County, Pennsylvania
- Family Voices, Justice for Families, Campaign for Youth Justice, and The Annie E. Casey Foundation for their groundbreaking work on family engagement

—Susan H. Badeau

First and foremost, I'd to like to thank the lived experience experts for their invaluable guidance, encouragement, and constructive feedback throughout this ongoing process. Their expertise and insights greatly enhanced the quality of this work.

I also wish to thank the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention for providing the necessary resources and guidance.

Additionally, I am grateful to my peers and colleagues for their insightful discussions, which have been both intellectually enriching and supportive. I would like to acknowledge my family and friends for their continuous encouragement and patience.

Special thank you to Louie Gasper, Kristen Nicole Powell, and Kyla Woods.

—Tymber Hudson

Table of Contents

About OJJDP ..... **v**

Key Words Used in This Guide ..... **vii**

Overview **1**

Background and History 2

What the Research Says About Youth and Family Partnerships 4

1. Preparing for Engagement **7**

Family Engagement and Partnership Pathway 7

Partnerships With Youth and Their Families Benefit Everyone 10

2. Assessment **13**

Preparing for Effective Partnerships 13

Practice Pointers: Discussion Prompts To Prepare for Effective Youth and Family Engagement and Partnerships 15

Assessing Your Readiness for Partnering With Lived Experience Experts 18

Readiness Assessment 20

3. Implementation **23**

Partnering With Youth and Families Using Trauma-Responsive Approaches 23

Best Practices for Partnering With Lived Experience Experts 24

4. Evaluation **27**

Evaluating Success and Making Necessary Adjustments 27

5. Conclusion **29**

References **31**

Links Mentioned in This Document **37**

Additional Resource 38

Appendix: SMARTER Goals Worksheet **39**

About OJJDP

The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) is guided by its vision, mission, and three fundamental priorities, all of which focus on improving opportunities, outcomes, and overall safety and well-being for youth, families, and communities.

OJJDP supports programs, training, and research for state, local, and Tribal agencies and their community-based partners. These efforts help *reduce* youth involvement with the justice system and *increase* their safety and success during and after system involvement.

Vision: OJJDP envisions a nation where all children are free from crime and violence. Youth contact with the justice system should be rare, fair, and beneficial.

Mission: OJJDP provides national leadership, coordination, and resources to prevent and respond to youth delinquency and victimization. The Office helps states, localities, and Tribes develop effective and equitable juvenile justice systems that create safer communities and empower youth to lead productive lives.

Priorities:

- Treat children as children.
- Serve children at home, with their families, in their communities.
- Open up opportunities for system-involved youth.

At the core of each of these priorities is a promise to partner with young people and families who are directly impacted by the juvenile justice system and an unwavering commitment to racial equity and fairness.

See OJJDP Priorities for more information.

Key Words Used in This Guide

Language has power. To truly develop meaningful youth and family partnerships, it is important to be mindful, intentional, and specific when using words to describe people's life experiences, expertise, and legal status. (For further discussion of the impact of words on policy and practice, see National Institute on Drug Abuse 2021.)

Juvenile or juvenile delinquent vs. youth or young person. The word "juvenile" has long been associated with young people who have been accused of breaking the law. The terms "juvenile" and "delinquent" carry significant stigma and can result in a mindset of blaming the child and/or their family rather than recognizing strengths, offering support, and improving outcomes for young people. In this guide, we avoid using the words "juvenile" or "delinquent" to describe persons (except to describe the system as noted below).

Whenever possible, we use the words "child," "youth," or "young person" to describe individuals younger than age 18 (or age 21, at times, depending on the context). "Young adult" is the term used to describe individuals older than age 18 (or age 21, depending on the context) who have lived experience and expertise in the justice system. (For further discussion on this topic, see Kamenetz 2015.)

Juvenile justice system. The phrase "juvenile justice system" is also problematic and stigmatizing for young people and their families. Many advocates are trying to reframe the

language to talk about the "youth justice system" instead. However, the actual name of the local system that youth and families may find themselves involved with is typically still called the juvenile justice system. Therefore, in this guide we use the two terms together (juvenile/youth justice system) to avoid confusion.

Lived experience/lived expertise. People with lived experience are those directly affected by social, health, public health, or other issues and the strategies that aim to address those issues. This gives them insights that can inform and improve systems, research, policies, practices, and programs (Engaging People with Lived Experience to Improve Federal Research, Policy, and Practice). For further discussion on this topic, see 1. Getting Started - Engaging People with Lived Experience. Engagement and partnership with youth and families require full inclusion of people with an array of lived experiences. Beyond experience, however, we must also recognize that individuals with these experiences have gained wisdom and expertise. Therefore, in this guide we use both the terms "lived experience" and "lived expertise."

Overview

Over the past 20 years, experts in the youth justice field have generally agreed on the importance of youth and family engagement in the development and implementation of programs designed to prevent delinquency, intervene with system-involved youth, and prevent recidivism. However, there is less agreement about what represents *meaningful and effective* engagement with youth and families. Rarer still is discussion about actual strategies and practices that support this engagement. When asked, staff at many agencies and programs believe they *are* engaging with families simply because they have families *involved* in their programs as recipients of services or in other roles, such as advisors. OJJDP believes that true engagement goes beyond involvement to achieve sustainable and effective partnerships at all levels: direct service, policy, practice, and system improvement.

Hart's Ladder of Participation[1] is often used as a starting point for understanding the complex and multilayered path for youth participation and engagement in social and civic life (see figure 1). Young people who are involved in the youth justice system and their families may experience a similar path. They live with the realities, impacts, and consequences of their experiences with the justice system and can provide the most

[1] Hart 1992, 2008. Hart's work grew out of the original work of Sherry Arnstein's "Ladder of Citizen Participation" (Arnstein 1969).

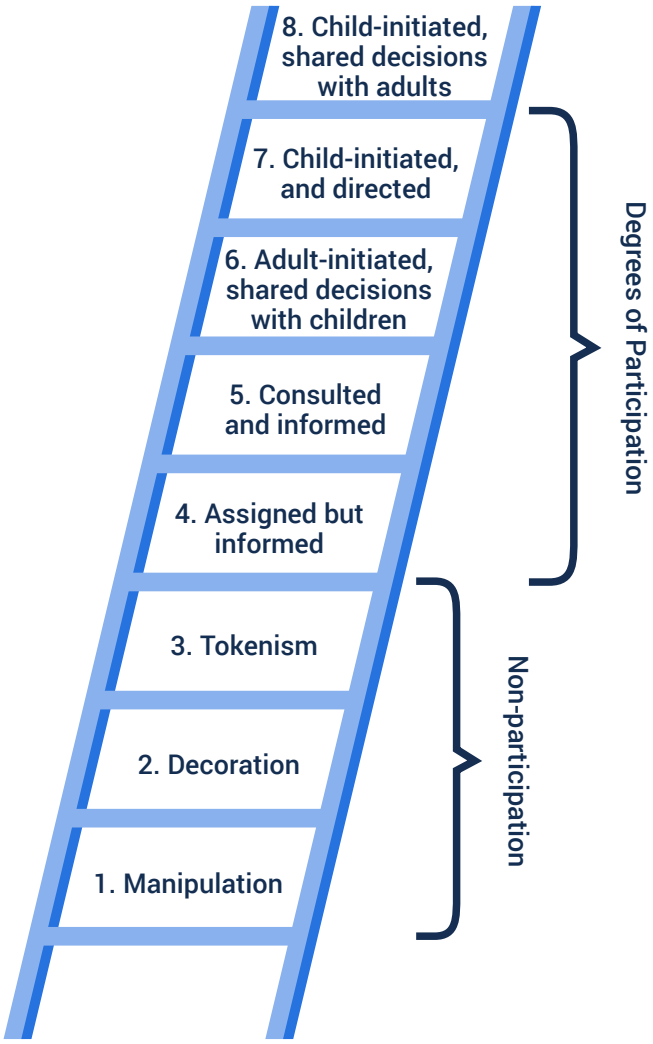
relevant and nuanced guidance related to defining and practicing engagement and partnership.

In developing this best practices guide, we reviewed the most current literature about youth and family engagement and conducted indepth interviews with dozens of system-involved young adults and their families. Their expertise and input are reflected in this guide. We are deeply grateful for their wisdom, dedication, advocacy, and articulate framing of the issues addressed.

This best practices guide uses a simplified continuum[2] denoting three levels of youth and family engagement, readiness, and implementation:

- **Interaction:** Primarily **transactional (and often one-way) connections** between youth/ families and program leadership and staff.
- **Engagement: Relational, two-way connections** between youth/families and program leadership and staff.
- **Partnership: Power-sharing connections** between youth/families and program leadership and staff.

Figure 1: The Ladder of Participation



Background and History

The justice system's purpose is to deter crime and protect communities. Youth justice systems have the added purpose of rehabilitating youth who have engaged in conduct

[2] The Family Engagement Continuum was developed by Sue Badeau in the 1990s and was adapted and adopted by Justice for Families during Badeau's work with them from 2012 to 2021. It is used here with permission.

> I would say that a lot of the children and families in the system, we come from a place of trauma. Now, that could be all kinds of different trauma. I mean, you're talking poverty, abuse, mental illness—it could be drug abuse. If everything was going great, our children wouldn't be involved in the system. And because of trauma, there's a lack of trust. Children don't trust adults a lot of the times, and they definitely don't trust a system that historically was just a branch of law enforcement. It wasn't somebody out there that was trying to help me, it was somebody that was enforcing a court order. Children (or parents, for that matter) do not want to talk to somebody if they feel they're going to take that information and use it against them. My son should have been in front of a doctor; instead, he was in front of a judge."
>
> —Father of a youth involved in the justice system

that is either criminal or "delinquent" (such as status offenses). Often, systems have used punitive and, at times, coercive approaches to achieve these purposes, resulting in young people and their families experiencing blame and shame. This stigma is a prime reason that justice-involved families and youth have historically been less likely to come together and use their collective voices for change (Gately 2014).

In addition, families have often been characterized as the "problem" rather than critical to the "solution" when addressing the behaviors of youth involved in the justice system. Thus, the youth justice system did not seek to engage families—they actively discouraged family involvement due to the pervasive belief that separating the child from the "negative influences" of family (and by extension, culture and community) was essential to improved safety for both the child and the community. Many of these beliefs still undergird juvenile justice practices and policies in place today.

However, the significant value of family and youth engagement in the youth justice system has been explored, researched, discussed, and highlighted in policy briefs, advocacy efforts, position statements, and practice guidance for at least two decades. (See the 2018

Model Programs Guide Literature Review on "Family Engagement in Juvenile Justice" for references going back more than 20 years.)

What the Research Says About Youth and Family Partnerships

The largest body of research on the impact of youth and family partnerships focuses on the fields of education and physical and mental health. These findings and the emerging literature on partnerships in youth justice—combined with the expertise of individuals with lived experience—have identified six broad reasons why effectively engaging and partnering with youth and families is crucial to achieving youth justice.

1. **Representation.** It is neither morally nor ethically acceptable to serve a specific population without meaningful representation of that population—in this case, youth and their families—at every level of decisionmaking, policy setting, and practice implementation (Walden, Javdani, and Allen 2014; Humowitz 2022; Mikytuck, Woolard, and Umpierre 2019).

2. **Improved outcomes.** When families and youth are engaged in ways that allow their experiences, wisdom, and voices to be heard, valued, and used to inform decisions, policy, and practices that relate to their lives and the lives of their families and peers, they experience improved outcomes across multiple parts of their lives (e.g., health, work, community, family, spirituality) (Development Services Group, Inc. 2015, 2018; Burke et al. 2014; Young et al. 2019; Carnevale and Associates, LLC and University of Arizona – Southwest Institute for Research on Women 2015; Harris et al. 2017; McKay et al. 2014; Humowitz 2022; Mikytuck, Woolard, and Umpierre 2019; Simons et al. 2018; Mapp et al. 2022).

   > Engaging youth and families in a meaningful way improves outcomes and community safety.

3. **Improved return on investment of public and private dollars.** When youth and families are engaged in a meaningful way, funds can be targeted in the most effective ways to reduce waste, duplication of services and supports, and inefficiencies (Justice for Families and DataCenter 2012; Carnevale and Associates, LLC and University of Arizona – Southwest Institute for Research on Women 2015; Walden, Javdani, and Allen 2014; Humowitz 2022; Mapp et al. 2022).

4. **Improved professional environments.** When systems and programs effectively engage youth and families, they experience improved workplace climates, higher

worker morale, and reduced turnover (Humowitz 2022; Lambert, Hogan, and Barton 2002; Mikytuck, Woolard, and Umpierre 2019; Mapp et al. 2022).

5. **Improved community safety.** When youth and families are seen as partners and fully engaged in services and advocacy efforts, recidivism decreases and other measures of community safety improve (Burke et al. 2014; Young et al. 2019; Carnevale and Associates, LLC and University of Arizona – Southwest Institute for Research on Women 2015; Harris et al. 2017; Walden, Javdani, and Allen 2014; Humowitz 2022).

6. **Reduced trauma.** When youth justice systems implement trauma-responsive policies and practices—which is most effectively done by working with youth and families who have lived experiences with the systems—the impact of trauma is reduced, youth and families have opportunities to heal and thrive, and the likelihood of new traumatic exposure is mitigated (Humowitz 2022; Rozzell 2013; Wyrick and Atkinson 2021).

These six benefits of engaging and partnering with youth and families are interconnected. None of these benefits occur in isolation or without corresponding benefits in other areas. This best practices guide will:

- Explore these partnership benefits further.
- Provide guidance for program staff on assessing their readiness for effectively engaging and partnering with youth and families.
- Discuss how such partnerships fit into the mission of specific programs or initiatives, whether they provide direct services to youth and families or work in other areas such as data, research, policy, or system levels.
- Offer examples of best practices for engagement and partnership.
- Address the importance of evaluating partnership efforts.

1. Preparing for Engagement

Family Engagement and Partnership Pathway

The following concepts offer a framework for exploring strategies and opportunities for youth, families, and program leadership and staff to participate in all phases of the youth justice system, from prevention and program design to aftercare and program evaluation.

- **Interaction.** Primarily **transactional (and often one-way) connections** between youth/families and program leadership and staff, including providing information and scheduling appointments.
- **Engagement. Relational, two-way connections** between youth/families and program leadership and staff, including participation in case planning, agency activities, and treatment opportunities.
- **Partnership. Power-sharing connections** between youth/families and program leadership and staff, including voting roles for youth or families in agency governance, policy decisions, or budget concerns.

Practice Pointers: Creating Partnerships

The following table offers examples of interactions and engagements that often occur in the youth justice system and where they fall on the partnership pathway:

Interaction (transactional)	Engagement (relational)	Partnership (shared power)
Calling a young person or family member to remind them of an appointment	Exploring with a young person how often, when, where, and for what purpose meetings (or appointments) should occur	Co-creating programs[3] with youth and families, including the determination of if, when, and for what purpose meetings or appointments occur
Offering a young person or family member transportation to a meeting	Exploring with a youth or family their preferred method for transportation to and from important events	Co-creating budgets with youth and families, including determining if and how funds will be spent for supports such as transportation
Interviewing a family member to learn more about a young person	Open-ended dialogues, focus groups, or other avenues for youth, families, and professionals to get to know each other	Listening and responding to feedback from youth as part of the program's embedded continuous quality improvement process
Providing fliers about upcoming activities for youth in the community	Inviting youth and family members to participate in an event-planning committee	Ensuring youth and family members have paid positions within the organization and/or have voting authority on decisionmaking bodies (such as a board of directors) to ensure they are part of the planning process
Collecting data from youth or families for research purposes	Inviting youth and families to advise/consult on what data to collect and how to collect it	Co-creating and implementing data collection and research projects with youth and families
Providing announcements about budget or policy changes	Holding hearings or other mechanisms to solicit and collect input from youth and families before enacting new policies or budgets	Co-creating budgets and internal and external policies with youth and families

Each of these forms of connection is a necessary part of building and sustaining effective and meaningful change and improved outcomes in our communities. Sometimes

[3] Co-creation describes a collaborative process that happens when the people who are most impacted by a service or program take the lead in developing and implementing it. It requires intentional time and resources around supporting the aspirations of systematically excluded communities (Barbakoff 2023).

> "I bring common sense to the table. I don't have a degree in social work. I don't have previous employment history in juvenile justice. I'm smart enough to listen and learn. I'm not afraid to ask questions. But I sit back in every situation and say, 'If I was the dad in that situation, how would I feel about this happening to me, or my family, or my kids?' And I'm not afraid to say whether I agree or disagree and why. And that's why I'm at the position I'm at now. And I have found that in a surprising lot of circumstances, I turn a lot of heads with my comments."
>
> —Father of a youth involved in the justice system

interaction (or transactional communication) is necessary and required to build trust and foster more whole-hearted engagement. Interaction will also be necessary throughout the life of an organization's work with a specific youth and their family (e.g., there will always be times you have to call simply to convey a message or provide information about an upcoming date for court or an appointment). If these interactions are not conducted with openness, honesty, and respect, barriers will be created or reinforced, which will undermine further engagement and partnership efforts. The key is not to allow these transactional communications to completely define your program's relationship with the youth and families you serve.

Engaging young people and their families beyond their own case is an important goal (Shaw et al. 2019). How do you engage youth and families in the broader work of the agency or community? Do families provide input and/or leadership on materials, training, events, agency policy, agency budget, public relations, or legislation?

Engagement, and ultimately partnership, should occur at each of these three levels:

- **Individual-level partnership** (e.g., case planning and direct service delivery before, during, and after contact with youth-serving systems).
- **Agency-level partnership** (e.g., policy, practice, and program development, implementation, and evaluation; staffing; advisory bodies; budget development).
- **System-level partnership** (e.g., in strategic planning activities, system improvement initiatives, advocacy strategies, and reform efforts).

Partnerships With Youth and Their Families Benefit Everyone

Six specific benefits of partnering with youth and families were discussed previously, including benefits for individual youth and families, justice system workforce and programs, and the broader community. These benefits are grounded in the following beliefs about youth and families:

- Families love their children and want them to be safe and thrive in all areas of their lives.
- Young people, including those who have engaged in behaviors that led to justice system contact, have goals and dreams for their lives.
- Problems that start in one domain (for example, trauma, health concerns, loss of housing, or special educational needs) often are connected to problems in other life domains.
- Families who seek help often get misdirected or fall through the cracks because they have "come to the wrong place" for the kind of help they need. They may not know where to turn when their needs are multiple and varied and system providers look at them through a narrow lens. If they are not eligible for or in need of the specific support a particular agency can provide, they may be turned away with no support at all. When families can get the right supports at the right time, justice involvement will significantly decrease.
- Youth often get mislabeled or misdirected when they use their voice and behavior to seek the help and support they need at home, at school, or in the community. Rather than receiving support and guidance that builds on their strengths and helps them navigate a path to success, they may be punished, separated from family and the community, and labeled in a way that creates barriers for future success.
- Children thrive when they are securely attached to a safe, stable, consistent, caregiving adult; economically secure; safely housed; and developmentally sound. A balanced diet, access to educational services, and a sense of connection and belonging to family and community are all critical to children's successes. Children and families thrive best when these services and supports are provided by people they can relate

> "I get so upset when I'm looking for assistance for one of our grand families[4] and they say, 'oh, we've got this program,' and you read the program, and you say, 'okay, that looks really great on paper, but it's not meeting the needs of our families.' It looks like they've checked this box, we've got this program, but they didn't listen to families. Like it says you have to be 65 to get services. And in our grand families, their ages run from 29 to 83. So this program is worthless to most of them. Maybe it was good at one time, but it is out of date with the times now."
>
> —Grandparent family advocate

to and connect with—people representative of their community, race, ethnicity, culture, language, religion, identity, and values.

Experienced and effective youth-serving agencies and justice systems recognize that programs and systems become outdated very quickly. Youth and family voices, especially those of people experiencing the system currently, provide representation at all levels. A lack of representation may lead to a lack of equity and to decisions being made without adequate information. Inclusion of authentic youth and family voices creates a real-time process for systems/programs to hear directly from those they serve to stop creating further harm, mitigate trauma, and improve outcomes.

Youth and family voices are essential as agencies and programs work to identify barriers or problems and be responsive in real time. This may involve gathering new data; reassessing how existing data are interpreted and used; or changing policies related to visits, social media use, medications, and more. Adjusting staffing roles or budgets and eliminating services that are ineffective or even harmful may also be necessary. Currently, there are limited opportunities for youth and their families to develop executive functioning skills such as those required to work on data, research, or policy and program development and evaluation. When systems partner with youth and families, they provide opportunities to practice problem solving in (ideally) safe and supportive environments. Repeated exposure to this process will support the development of lifelong skills that youth and families can use to solve problems and achieve goals in their personal and

[4] "Grand families" is a term widely used to describe grandparent-headed households raising children.

professional lives and as they continue to advocate for their communities (The Annie E. Casey Foundation n.d.).

Evaluations of treatment models such as multisystemic therapy demonstrate that when there is intensive family involvement, youth drug use, violence, aggression, school challenges, and undesirable behaviors are often reduced, as is recidivism (Gottfredson et al. 2018; Carlton 2020; Crime Solutions 2011, 2020). Nevertheless, the implementation (and even the naming and description) of such models is often done without youth and family engagement, resulting in mistrust, lack of participation, lack of fidelity to the model, program dropout, and overall decreased benefits from the program or intervention. With family and youth engagement, such efforts can be customized to address the culture of the community served, and they can be adapted to ensure participation by youth and families that will lead to the best outcomes.

> Intensive family involvement in treatment can reduce undesirable behaviors and recidivism.

The benefits of youth and family partnership do not happen overnight. A deep history of systemic racism, institutional abuses, and stigma has engendered a mountain of mistrust among youth, families, communities, and systems. Deconstructing this history and creating a new paradigm will take a generation or more. It needs to begin with respectful interactions that lead to trust-based engagement and, ultimately, authentic partnerships across all levels of justice system work—from individual case planning, programming, and treatment to broad, visionary, and sustainable system improvement efforts.

2. Assessment

Preparing for Effective Partnerships

Engaging and partnering with youth and families should never be an "add-on," afterthought, or discreet initiative—it should be an integral part of your program, from planning and assessment to implementation and evaluation. This means that youth and family partners should be at the table while you are envisioning and brainstorming *before* developing your program or grant proposal and budget as well as at every step thereafter.

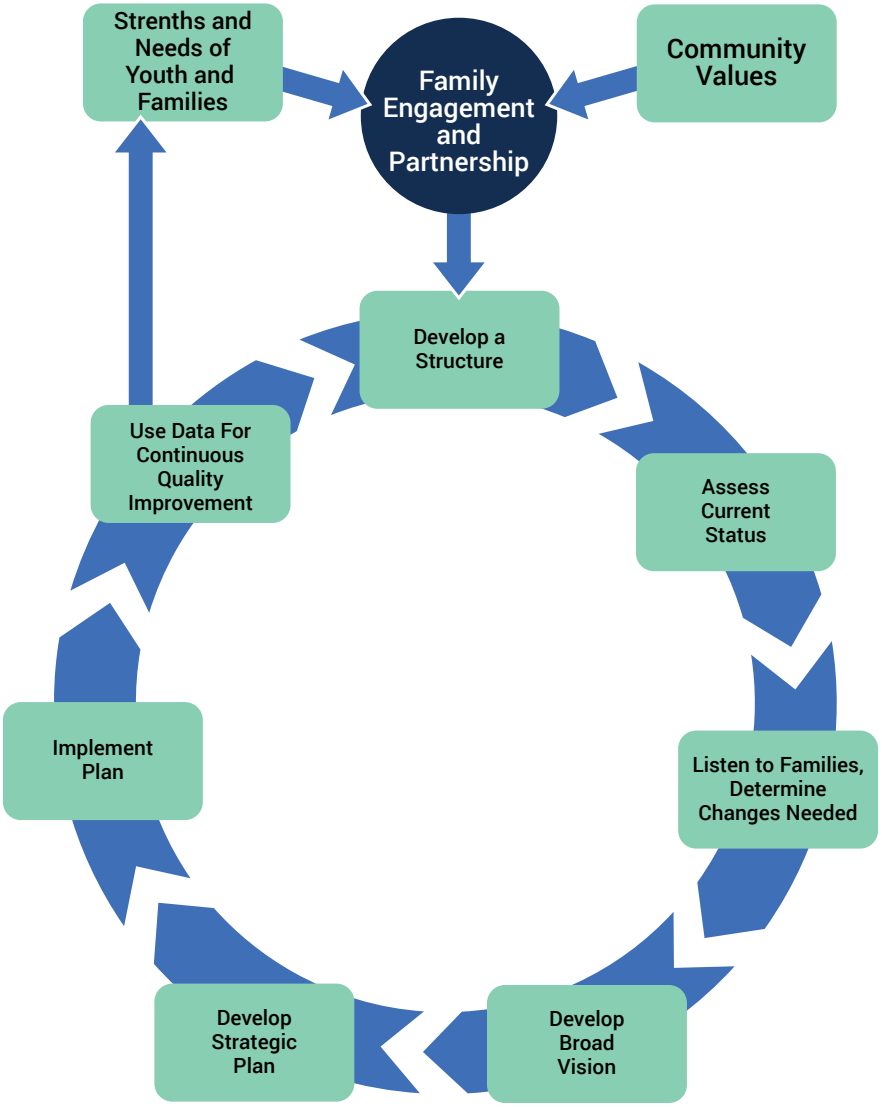
For established programs and initiatives, it is important to identify the goals for your youth and family partnerships, including the roles that youth and families will play, and engage them as early and authentically as possible.[5] You will also need to identify the structure and funding to support youth and family partnerships.

After working through the assessment steps described in this section, you will be ready to begin building the core components of successful, meaningful, and sustainable youth and family partnerships. Figure 2 highlights the core steps required to embrace, embed, and sustain youth and family partnerships in your program.

[5] The steps outlined in the assessment and evaluation segments of this guide will help you recognize, describe, define, and enhance authentic engagement and partnerships.

The work begins by creating a continuous culture of engagement and partnership. All staff and volunteers should understand "buy-in" and model positive engagement approaches. The agency's staff-supervision model should help staff to focus on building positive relationships with youth and their families. Youth and family engagement cannot be seen as an initiative, project, or event. It needs to be embedded into the culture of the organization and reflected in the accountability and evaluation mechanisms (Continuous Quality Improvement, or CQI) used. The use of surveys and focus groups is one way to incorporate CQI. Another is to ensure staff performance evaluations measure success promoting and supporting effective youth and family engagement and partnership across the organization.

Figure 2: Core Steps



> "I think policies, best practices, and system change work must begin with youth and family voices. People, including researchers and policymakers, do well with what they know. But they don't know what they don't know. When they partner with youth and families, they identify issues, factors, and barriers they had not previously been aware of or considered. These programs need family and youth engagement even more than direct service ones, in my opinion."
>
> —Family member of a youth involved in the justice system

Youth and families may not initially feel equipped to fill the desired roles within the organization or grant/program. Rather than relegating youth and families to superficial roles, offer them tools and supports to help them engage effectively. Preparation and support are the keys to developing long-lasting relationships with youth and family partners.

Some organizations may feel like youth and family engagement and partnership do not fit within their program or mission or are not relevant to them. This is often expressed by leaders of programs focused primarily on data, research, or policy work rather than direct service work. However, partnering with youth and families in all of these areas can reap many benefits. Youth and family partners can help researchers understand nuances about research questions they may not have considered. They can inform data collection in ways that make it more relevant. Their input into policy conversations can change them from academic exercises to the development of policy that is effective at the individual and community levels.

Practice Pointers: Discussion Prompts To Prepare for Effective Youth and Family Engagement and Partnerships

To move forward, programs and agencies need to assess the current status of youth and family involvement and identify their readiness for deeper and more meaningful engagement and partnership.

The questions provided below are offered as discussion starters and prompts to guide your work. Many of the questions begin with "How have you...?" This is not a yes/no checklist, but rather, a tool to engage organizational and program leadership to more

deeply reflect on the steps you are taking to increase genuine and authentic youth and family partnerships. It also provides you with clarity related to the areas in which your organization or program will need training, technical assistance, or other supports to achieve these goals.

What is the current status of youth and family involvement and your readiness for meaningful engagement?

Identify Youth and Family Voices

- Have you identified a liaison within your organization to work directly with individual youth and family leaders as well as with youth and family-led organizations in the community?
- Have you identified local organizations that have demonstrated credibility with diverse, directly impacted communities (not organizations that purport to speak for youth and families but those led by youth and families)?
- How are you including youth and family voices within your own organization? Have roles and job descriptions been developed? What is the supervisory chain of command for youth and family members?
- What preparation and support are you providing to enable youth and families to engage as full participants in the work?
- What resources and supports will you need organizationally to accomplish the steps above?

Listen to Youth and Family Partners

- How have you formalized leadership opportunities (such as paid staff positions or an advisory board) for youth and family members to ensure their partnership at all levels of the agency mission, program, or grant implementation? If not, what steps must be taken to create and formalize these opportunities?
- How have you included youth and family input in project design and implementation strategies? If you passed this phase without including youth and families, how will you authentically obtain and utilize feedback from youth and family partners going forward?
- How have you included, or how do you intend to include, youth and family input in the decisions about data collection, analysis, and utilization of data and performance measures for this project?

- How have you included, or how do you intend to include, youth and family input in the development and monitoring of the project budget?
- How have you included, or how do you intend to include, youth and family input into any outward-facing products, materials, or events developed and disseminated by the project, such as brochures, social media posts, websites, press releases, and events?
- What resources and supports will you need organizationally to accomplish the steps above?

Implement Youth and Family Partnerships

- How have you partnered with, or how do you intend to partner with, youth and family members to set SMARTER goals, break goals into concrete strategies, create timelines, and implement work plans? (See the worksheet provided in the appendix for examples.)
- How have you developed, or how do you intend to develop, specific strategies to continuously receive input from a broad and diverse representation of youth and families in your community?
- How have you provided, or how do you intend to provide, ongoing support to youth and family partners through education, training, and professional development opportunities, compensation, and other tangible supports (e.g., transportation, childcare, food)?
- How do you, or how will you, provide opportunities for youth and family members to observe, consult, and lead projects?
- Have you determined how to appropriately compensate family/youth leaders for their time? (See Partnering with Youth & Families in Research: A Standard of Compensation for Youth and Family Partners.)
- How do you, or how will you, report back to impacted communities to share and receive input related to lessons learned, barriers experienced, modifications made, and other outcomes (expected and unexpected) from project implementation?
- If this work is taking place as part of a grant award, how do you, or how will you, partner with youth and families to jointly plan next steps to occur after the grant ends?
- What resources and supports will you need organizationally to accomplish the steps above?

Assessing Your Readiness for Partnering With Lived Experience Experts

Partnering with youth and families can be ineffective and undermine community trust if an agency does not first assess its readiness and prepare for meaningful, authentic partnerships. Organizations must evaluate the preparedness and capacity of youth, families, and the agency to effectively engage in collaborative partnerships. This involves assessing factors that can influence the success of these partnerships, such as the willingness, skills, resources, and support available to engage and involve youth and families in decisionmaking processes.

Partnering can be ineffective if an agency does not prepare for meaningful, authentic partnerships.

The following tools offer a starting point to begin assessing your organization's readiness for youth and family partnerships.

Readiness Survey

	Low Readiness				High Readiness	Your Score
Areas To Consider	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	
Organizational Readiness: Evaluate whether the organization or system is prepared to involve youth and families as partners. This includes assessing the organizational culture, policies, and practices that support meaningful engagement.						
Leadership Support: Assess the commitment and support from organizational leaders to promote and prioritize youth and family partnerships. Strong leadership is essential for creating an environment that values and empowers youth and families.						
Resources and Capacity: Determine whether the necessary resources—such as time, funding, and staff—are available to support effective engagement. Adequate capacity-building efforts should be in place to provide training and support for youth and families.						
Communication and Collaboration: Evaluate the communication channels and mechanisms in place to facilitate effective collaboration among youth, families, and professionals. Assess the levels of trust, respect, and open communication among all stakeholders.						
Youth and Family Readiness: Assess the readiness of youth and families to engage in partnership activities. Consider their knowledge, skills, and experiences as well as their willingness to participate and contribute.						
Access and Inclusion: Examine whether there are mechanisms in place to ensure equitable access and inclusion of diverse youth and families. Assess whether barriers such as language, disabilities, cultural differences, or socioeconomic factors are addressed.						
Supportive Environment: Evaluate whether the environment supports and includes youth and families. Assess the physical space, policies, and practices that create a welcoming and safe atmosphere for engagement.						

Readiness Assessment

Designing a readiness assessment for youth and family partnerships involves creating a tool to evaluate an organization's preparedness and capacity to engage effectively with youth and families. Following is a sample outline for creating a readiness assessment tool that you can customize based on the specific context and goals of your organization.

This readiness assessment should be administered through surveys, interviews, focus groups, or a combination of these methods. Analyzing the results will provide insights into areas of strength and areas that require attention as the organization moves toward meaningful partnerships with youth and families.

I. Introduction
1. **Purpose of the Assessment.** Evaluate the organization's readiness for meaningful and effective partnerships with youth and families.
2. **Confidentiality and Informed Consent.** Ensure participants understand the purpose of the assessment and that their responses will be confidential. Obtain informed consent in writing.
II. Organizational Context
3. **Mission and Values.** Determine how your organization's mission and values align with the principles of youth and family partnerships.
4. **Leadership Support.** Assess the level of leadership commitment and support for engaging youth and families in decisionmaking processes.
5. **Organizational Culture.** Evaluate the existing organizational culture regarding inclusivity, collaboration, and openness to diverse perspectives.
III. Policies and Practices
6. **Existing Policies.** Review current policies to identify any barriers to youth and family engagement.
7. **Staff Training.** Assess the availability and effectiveness of training programs for staff on youth and family engagement.
8. **Communication Strategies.** Evaluate how the organization communicates with youth and families and the effectiveness of those strategies.

IV. Resources and Support
9. **Financial Resources.** Assess the availability of budgetary resources dedicated to youth and family partnerships.
10. **Staffing.** Evaluate the adequacy of staffing resources to support youth and family partnerships.
11. **Community Connections.** Assess existing partnerships and collaborations with community organizations that work with youth and families to better understand how to authentically deepen these relationships to provide new opportunities for unique communities.
V. Stakeholder Involvement
12. **Youth and Family Representation.** Evaluate the extent to which youth and families are represented in decisionmaking bodies within the organization.
13. **Community Input.** Assess pathways for obtaining input from the broader community and incorporating diverse perspectives into agency decisionmaking.
VI. Evaluation and Learning
14. **Data Collection and Evaluation.** Assess the organization's capacity for collecting and utilizing data to inform youth and family engagement strategies.
15. **Continuous Improvement.** Evaluate the organization's commitment to ongoing learning and adapting strategies based on feedback.
VII. Capacity Building
16. **Training and Development Opportunities.** Assess the availability of training and development opportunities for youth and families to enhance their capacity for partnership.
17. **Mentorship Programs.** Evaluate the existence of mentorship and coaching programs to support the development of youth and family leaders.
VIII. Conclusion and Next Steps
18. **Summary of Findings.** Summarize key findings from the assessment.
19. **Recommendations.** Provide recommendations for areas of improvement and concrete, actionable next steps to enhance the organization's readiness for youth and family partnerships.

Additional Readiness Resources

1. Preparation Checklist for Engagement of Young People and Families in the CFSR [Child and Family Services Review].
2. NAF Youth Engagement Readiness Tool.
3. Youth Participation Guide: Assessment, Planning, and Implementation.

3. Implementation

Partnering With Youth and Families Using Trauma-Responsive Approaches

Any effort to create partnerships with justice-involved youth and their families should include a trauma-responsive approach to these partnerships.

Although most children who experience trauma do not become involved with law enforcement or the juvenile/youth or adult criminal justice systems (Marsiglio et al. 2014), trauma makes youth significantly more likely to come to the attention of law enforcement. In fact, more than 90 percent of young people involved with the juvenile/youth justice system experienced trauma—many of them multiple, chronic, and pervasive traumas (Charak et al. 2019). Children and youth involved with multiple systems (including justice, child welfare, mental/behavioral health, and special education) are particularly vulnerable to exposure to trauma and its complex impacts (Rozzell 2013). Because of factors related to historic, intergenerational, and collective trauma (including systemic racism and long-term economic barriers), the families of youth who come in contact with these systems often have their own trauma exposures and histories. In addition, professional staff working in these systems are at high risk for secondary traumatic stress (Smith et al. 2011).

Systems must become more trauma informed and trauma responsive if lasting, positive impact and outcomes are to be realized for individuals and communities. Agencies, programs, and systems should use trauma-responsive approaches in their work with youth and families to ensure that engagement and partnership efforts support healing, wellness, and resilience rather than retraumatizing youth and families. Both the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and the National Child Traumatic Stress Network provide resources that can assist justice systems and programs in their efforts to become more trauma informed and responsive.

Best Practices for Partnering With Lived Experience Experts

Partnering with lived experience experts involves incorporating their insights and perspectives into decisionmaking processes, program development, and service delivery. These efforts must not be merely ornamental. Lived experience experts offer a unique opportunity to impact real change. Best practices for effectively collaborating with youth and families who have lived experience (The Annie E Casey Foundation 2019) include:

> Systems must become more trauma informed and responsive to improve outcomes.

- **Genuine engagement.** Approach youth with authenticity, respect, and a genuine interest in their experiences. Make them feel valued and heard.
- **Cultural competence and humility.** Becoming culturally competent and practicing cultural humility are ongoing processes that change in response to new situations, experiences, and relationships. Appreciate the many cultures that vary based on geographic location, ethnicity, nationality, political beliefs, or government. Understanding these differences is important to creating an inclusive environment.
- **Youth-friendly spaces.** Create safe and welcoming youth-led spaces that invite young people to express themselves without fear of judgment. Ensure confidentiality and privacy to build trust.
- **Youth leadership opportunities.** Provide opportunities for youth to take on leadership roles in decisionmaking, planning, and implementation. Empower them to be active participants in shaping programs and serving on boards and committees.
- **Flexible and inclusive formats.** Recognize that traditional meeting formats may not be effective for lived experience experts. Use varied and flexible formats—such

as workshops, focus groups, and digital platforms—to encourage and facilitate participation.

- **Active listening.** Listen actively to the voices of youth. Create opportunities for open dialogue and feedback, ensuring their perspectives are genuinely considered in the decisionmaking process. It is equally important to develop feedback loops after decisions have been made to ensure lived experience experts are informed about if and how their input was used.

- **Skill-building opportunities.** Offer skill building to enhance the capabilities of youth and family participants. This could include training in advocacy, leadership, and communication. Give lived experience experts a chance to share what skills they would like to gain/develop through this process.

- **Co-creation of solutions.** Collaborate with lived experience experts in the design and development of programs and services. Allow them to co-create solutions that address their unique needs and preferences.

- **Respect for diversity of experience.** Recognize that lived experience experts have diverse backgrounds and experiences. Avoid making assumptions and ensure that a broad range of perspectives is considered.

- **Mentorship and support.** Provide mentorship and support for lived experience experts involved in decisionmaking. Guide them in navigating challenges and opportunities for personal and professional growth.

- **Regular check-ins.** Conduct regular check-ins to assess the well-being of lived experience experts and how they feel the project is going. Ensure that they feel supported and valued throughout the partnership.

- **Accessible information.** Provide information in clear, accessible formats. Ensure that materials are age appropriate and easily understandable by lived experience experts with varying literacy levels.

- **Recognition and acknowledgment.** Acknowledge and celebrate the contributions of lived experience experts. Publicly recognize their efforts and the impact they have on programs and initiatives.

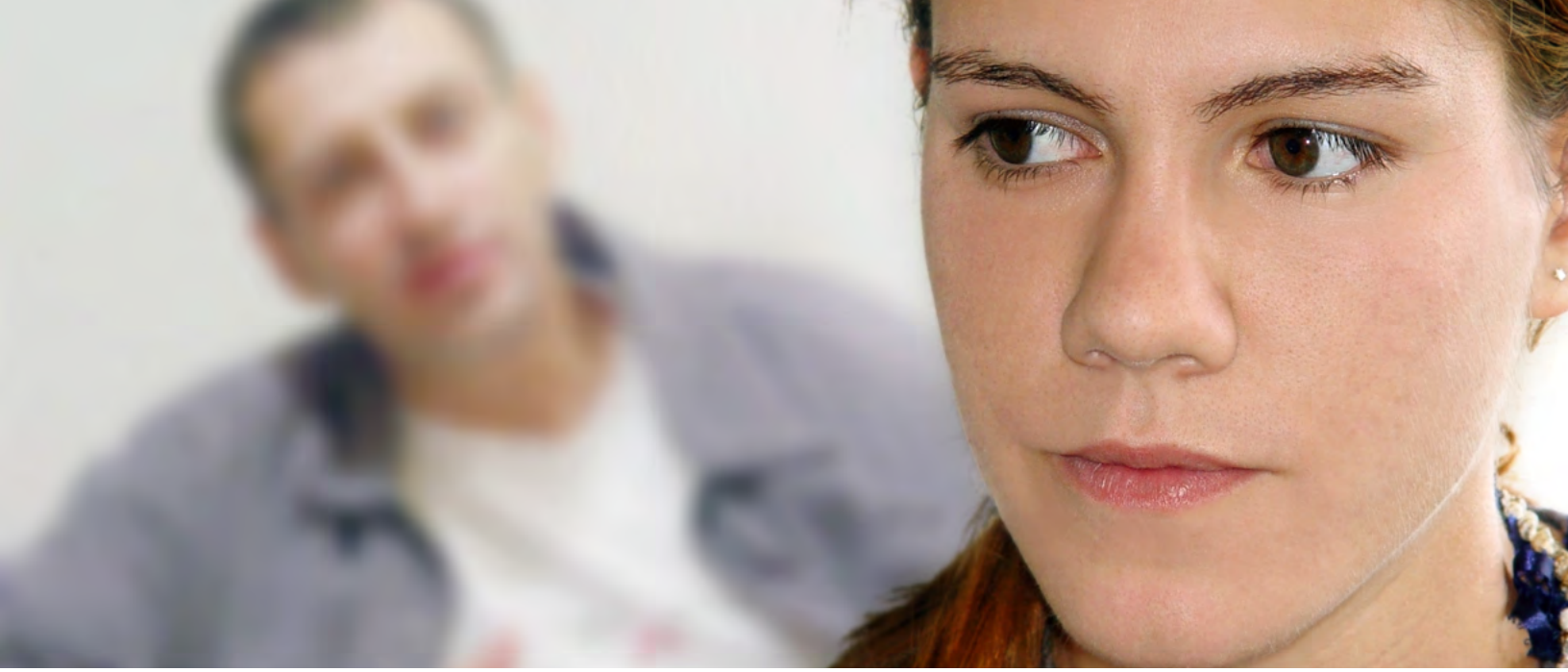
- **Flexible scheduling.** Be mindful of scheduling constraints that lived experience experts may face, such as school commitments or work obligations. Offer flexible meeting times to accommodate their availability.

- **Continuous learning and improvement.** Regularly assess the effectiveness of the partnership and be open to feedback. Use insights gained to continuously improve and adapt strategies for better engagement.

Youth with lived experience and their families are experts in their own right, and their involvement is essential for creating programs and services that are relevant, responsive, and effective.

Additional Best Practice Resources

1. 10 practices To Support Youth Voice.
2. Methods and Emerging Strategies to Engage People with Lived Experience.
3. Distinguishing Cultural Humility From Cultural Competence.
4. Game Plan for Engaging Youth.
5. Family Engagement.



4. Evaluation

Evaluating Success and Making Necessary Adjustments

Continuous Quality Improvement[6] (CQI) is a management philosophy and set of practices that focus on improving organizational processes, systems, and services in an ongoing and iterative manner. The goal of CQI is to enhance efficiency, effectiveness, and overall quality by identifying areas for improvement and implementing changes based on data-driven insights. CQI is widely used across various industries, including healthcare, education, manufacturing, and service sectors (American Society for Quality n.d.). It's a useful tool to start evaluating the effectiveness of your partnership efforts.

Key components of CQI include:

- **Data-driven decisionmaking.** CQI relies on data collection, analysis, and interpretation to inform decisionmaking. Organizations use quantitative and qualitative data to identify areas for improvement and measure the impact of changes.
- **Iterative process.** CQI is an ongoing, cyclic process that involves planning improvements, implementing changes, evaluating outcomes, and making further

[6] The Child Welfare Capacity Building Collaborative's Center for States offers a toolkit on the CQI process.

adjustments. This iterative process allows organizations to adapt to evolving circumstances and continuously enhance their performance.

- **Community focus.** CQI places a strong emphasis on meeting and exceeding target audience expectations. It involves seeking feedback from the community and stakeholders to understand their needs and preferences and ensure improvements align with their expectations.
- **Employee involvement.** Employees at all levels of the organization are actively involved in the CQI process. Their insights and experiences are valuable for identifying issues, generating improvement ideas, and implementing changes on the ground.
- **Benchmarking.** CQI often involves comparing organizational performance against established benchmarks or best practices. Benchmarking helps identify areas where an organization may be falling behind or excelling, providing context for improvement efforts.
- **Leadership commitment.** Successful CQI requires strong leadership commitment and support. Leaders play a crucial role in fostering a culture of continuous improvement, allocating resources, and ensuring that improvement initiatives align with organizational goals.
- **Process mapping.** Organizations often use process mapping to visually represent and analyze their workflows. This helps identify inefficiencies, bottlenecks, and areas for improvement.
- **Root cause analysis.** CQI involves conducting root cause analysis when issues and challenges arise to identify the underlying factors contributing to problems. Addressing root causes helps prevent recurring issues.
- **Performance metrics.** Clearly defined performance metrics are established to measure progress and outcomes. These metrics are used to assess the effectiveness of improvement efforts and track and improve performance over time.
- **Documentation and communication.** CQI involves documenting processes, changes, and outcomes. Clear communication ensures that everyone in the organization is aware of improvement initiatives, contributing to a shared understanding of goals and progress.

By embracing Continuous Quality Improvement, organizations can foster a culture of innovation, adaptability, and excellence. This will ultimately lead to better outcomes, increased participant satisfaction, and overall organizational success.

5. Conclusion

Partnering with youth and families is emerging as a core value of youth- and family-serving systems, from education and health care to child welfare and youth justice. As demonstrated throughout this guide, these partnerships provide well-documented benefits not only to the youth and families served by youth justice agencies but to the system itself. Improved outcomes across multiple domains—including reduced trauma, improved well-being, reduced recidivism, and improved staff development—are only a few of the reasons to create partnerships with young people and their families.

Over the past decade, providers, program developers, and policymakers have begun to explore the benefits of engaging youth and families but struggled to move from initial steps of interaction and involvement to meaningful engagement and true partnership. We hope this guide provides you with useful tips and concrete next steps to help you move across the continuum, from interaction and involvement to engagement and partnership, using the tools here to assess the status of your organization's youth and family partnerships and evaluate your progress along the way.

References

Most of the expertise offered in this guide was gained through the authors' collective lived experience with advocacy and system-change efforts. Existing research is focused on the first stage of engagement (i.e., involving youth and families in their own "cases"), which is essential but not sufficient. Experience in other fields, including education and medical and mental healthcare, demonstrates that engaging and partnering with youth and families in increasingly higher, broader, and deeper levels has significant benefits for individuals and communities.

American Society for Quality. n.d. Continuous Quality Improvement. asq.org/quality-resources/continuous-improvement.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation. n.d. Positive Youth Development. aecf.org/topics/positive-youth-development.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation. 2019. A Framework for Effectively Partnering With Young People. aecf.org/resources/a-framework-for-effectively-partnering-with-young-people.

Arnstein, S. 1969. "A ladder of citizen participation." *Journal of the American Planning Association* 35, no. 4: 216–224. tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/01944366908977225.

Barbakoff, A. 2023. "Co-create authentically with your community." OCLC Next. blog.oclc.org/next/co-create-with-your-community.

Burke, J., E. Mulvey, C. Schubert, and S. Garbin. 2014. "The Challenge and Opportunity of Parental Involvement in Juvenile Justice Services." *Children and Youth Services Review* 39: 39–47. ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3989100.

Carlton, M.P. 2020. "Functional Family Therapy–Gangs: Adapting an Evidence-Based Program To Reduce Gang Involvement." *National Institute of Justice Journal* 282: 59–63. nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/functional-family-therapy-gangs-adapting-evidence-based-program-reduce-gang.

Carnevale and Associates, LLC and University of Arizona – Southwest Institute for Research on Women. 2015. *Family Engagement in Juvenile Drug Court: Lessons Learned.* National Cross-Site Evaluation of Juvenile Drug Courts and Reclaiming Futures Policy Brief. web.archive.org/web/20200721110302/http://sirow.arizona.edu/sites/sirow.arizona.edu/files/Appendix%201_Policy%20Brief-%20Family%20Engagement_FINAL.pdf.

Charak, R., J.D. Ford, C.A. Modrowski, and P.K. Kerig. 2019. "Polyvictimization, Emotion Dysregulation, Symptoms of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, and Behavioral Health Problems among Justice-Involved Youth: a Latent Class Analysis." *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology* 47: 287–298. doi.org/10.1007/s10802-018-0431-9.

Crime Solutions. 2011. Program Profile: Multisystemic Therapy (MST). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice. crimesolutions.ojp.gov/ratedprograms/192.

Crime Solutions. 2020. Program Profile: Crossover Youth Practice Model. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, National Institute of Justice. crimesolutions.ojp.gov/ratedprograms/691.

Development Services Group, Inc. 2015. "Protective Factors Against Delinquency." Literature Review. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. ojjdp.ojp.gov/model-programs-guide/literature-reviews/protective_factors_against_delinquency.pdf.

Development Services Group, Inc. 2018. "Family Engagement in Juvenile Justice." Literature Review. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. ojjdp.ojp.gov/model-programs-guide/literature-reviews/family_engagement_in_juvenile_justice.pdf.

Gately, G. 2014. "Juvenile Facilities Strive to Foster 'Family Engagement'." Juvenile Justice Information Exchange. jjie.org/2014/11/10/juvenile-facilities-strive-to-foster-family-engagement/.

Gottfredson, D.C., T.P. Thornberry, M. Slothower, D. Devlin, B. Kearley, and J.J. Fader. 2018. *Reducing Gang Violence: A Randomized Trial of Functional Family Therapy.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice. ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/251754.pdf.

Harris, B., K. Keator, N. Vincent-Roller, and B. Keefer. 2017. *Engage, Involve, Empower: Family Engagement in Juvenile Drug Treatment Courts.* Reno, NV: National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. ncjfcj.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Engage-Involve-Empower-Family-Engagement-in-Juvenile-Drug-Treatment-Courts.pdf.

Hart, R.A. 1992. *Children's Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship.* Florence, Italy: United Nations Children's Fund International Child Development Centre.

Hart, R.A. 2008. "Stepping Back From 'The Ladder': Reflections on a Model of Participatory Work With Children." In *Participation and Learning: Perspectives on Education and the Environment, Health and Sustainability,* edited by A. Reid, B.B. Jensen, J. Nikel, and V. Simovska. Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer.

Humowitz, C. 2022. *The Essential Need for Partnering With Youth and Families to Fundamentally Transform Juvenile Probation.* Washington, DC: Georgetown University, McCourt School of Public Policy, Center for Juvenile Justice Reform.

Justice for Families and DataCenter. 2012. *Families Unlocking Futures: Solutions to the Crisis in Juvenile Justice.* Oakland, CA. justice4families.org/media/Families_Unlocking_FuturesFULLNOEMBARGO.pdf.

Kamenetz, A. April 28, 2015. "Delinquent. Dropout. At-Risk. When Words Become Labels." National Public Radio. npr.org/sections/ed/2015/04/28/399949478/delinquent-dropout-at-risk-whats-in-a-name.

Lambert, E.G., N.L. Hogan, and S.M. Barton. 2002. "Satisfied Correctional Staff: A Review of the Literature on the Correlates of Correctional Staff Job Satisfaction." *Criminal Justice and Behavior* 29, no. 2: 115–143. journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0093854802029002001.

Mapp, K.L., A.T. Henderson, S. Cuevas, M.C. Franco, and S. Ewert. 2022. *Everyone Wins!: The Evidence for Family-School Partnerships and Implications for Practice.* New York, NY: Scholastic.

Marsiglio, M.C., K.M. Chronister, B. Gibson, and L.D. Leve. 2014. "Examining the Link Between Traumatic Events and Delinquency Among Juvenile Delinquent Girls: A Longitudinal Study." *Journal of Child & Adolescent Trauma* 7, no. 4: 217–225. doi.org/10.1007/s40653-014-0029-5.

McKay, T., C. Lindquist, A. Melton, and R. Martinez. 2014. *Parent and Family Involvement with Youth in the Tribal Juvenile Justice System: Perspectives from OJJDP's Tribal Green Reentry Initiative.* Research Triangle Park, NC: RTI International. rti.org/sites/default/files/resources/family_involvement.pdf.

Mikytuck, A., J. Woolard, and M. Umpierre. 2019. "Improving Engagement, Empowerment, and Support in Juvenile Corrections through Research," *Translational Issues in Psychological Science* 5, no. 2: 182–192.

National Institute on Drug Abuse. 2021. "Words Matter: Preferred Language for Talking About Addiction." Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. nida.nih.gov/research-topics/addiction-science/words-matter-preferred-language-talking-about-addiction.

Rozzell, L. 2013. *The Role of Family Engagement in Creating Trauma-Informed Juvenile Justice Systems.* National Child Traumatic Stress Network. nctsn.org/resources/role-family-engagement-creating-trauma-informed-juvenile-justice-systems.

Shaw, S., and J. Angus-Kleinman. n.d. "Family Engagement in Juvenile Justice Systems: Building a Strategy and Shifting the Culture." The Council of State Governments Justice Center. csgjusticecenter.org/publications/family-engagement-in-juvenile-justice-systems/.

Simons, I., W. van der Vaart, E. Mulder, H. Rigter, R. Breuk, L. van Domburgh, and R. Vermeiren. 2018. "Parents' Perspectives on Family-centered Care in Juvenile Justice Institutions." *Juvenile and Family Court Journal* 69, no. 3: 39–54. onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdfdirect/10.1111/jfcj.12115.

Smith Hatcher, S., B.E. Bride, H. Oh, D. Moultrie King, and J. Franklin Catrett. 2011. "An Assessment of Secondary Traumatic Stress in Juvenile Justice Education Workers." *Journal of Correctional Health Care* 17, no. 3: 208–217. doi.org/10.1177/1078345811401509.

Walden, A.L., S. Javdani, and N.E. Allen. 2014. "Engaging Conflict: Supporting Power-Sharing Through Constructive Conflict Resolution." *Journal of Community Psychology* 42, no. 7, 854–868. onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/jcop.21657.

Wyrick, P., and K. Atkinson. 2021. "Examining the Relationship Between Childhood Trauma and Involvement in the Justice System." *National Institute of Justice Journal* 283: 29–36. nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/examining-relationship-between-childhood-trauma-and-involvement-justice-system.

Young, B.C., M. Nadel, G. Pesta, and W. Bales. 2019. *Family Attachment and Juvenile Justice Outcomes: An Assessment of Visitation of Juvenile Delinquents in Residential Facilities.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice. ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/254454.pdf.

Links Mentioned in This Document

The following links are embedded in the electronic version of this document:

1. Getting Started - Engaging People with Lived Experience: communitycommons.org/collections/1-Getting-Started-Engaging-People-with-Lived-Experience

10 Practices To Support Youth Voice: nylc.org/10-practices-to-support-youth-voice

CQI Self-Assessment Tools: capacity.childwelfare.gov/states/cqi/self-assessment

Distinguishing Cultural Humility from Cultural Competence: inclusion.uoregon.edu/distinguishing-cultural-humility-cultural-competence

Engaging People with Lived Experience to Improve Federal Research, Policy, and Practice: aspe.hhs.gov/lived-experience

Family Engagement: youth.gov/youth-topics/family-engagement

Game Plan for Engaging Youth: youth.gov/youth-topics/TAG/game-plan

Grand Families: gu.org/explore-our-topics/grandfamilies

Methods and Emerging Strategies to Engage People with Lived Experience: aspe.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/62e7a64c60e10c47484b763aa9868f99/lived-experience-brief.pdf

Model Programs Guide Literature Review, Family Engagement in Juvenile Justice: ojjdp.ojp.gov/model-programs-guide/literature-reviews/family_engagement_in_juvenile_justice.pdf

NAF Youth Engagement Readiness Tool: naf.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/NAF-Youth-Engagement-Readiness-Tool.pdf

OJJDP Priorities on the OJJDP website: ojjdp.ojp.gov/about/ojjdp-priorities

Partnering with Youth & Families in Research: A Standard of Compensation for Youth and Family Partners: children.wi.gov/Documents/LivedExperience/Standard%20of%20Compensation%20for%20Youth%20and%20Family%20Partners%20-%20CYSHCNet.pdf

Preparation Checklist for Engagement of Young People for Engagement of Young People and Families in the CFSR: capacity.childwelfare.gov/sites/default/files/media_pdf/Preparation-Checklist-for-Engagement-of-Young-People-and-Families-in-the-CFSR_3.16.23_508%20Updated.pdf

Youth Participation Guide: Assessment, Planning, and Implementation: unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/youth_participation.pdf

Additional Resource

Family Comes First: campaignforyouthjustice.org/images/CFYJ_Family_Comes_First_Color.compressed.pdf

Appendix: SMARTER Goals Worksheet

SAMPLE

Sample SMARTER Goal		
Goal: Create a survey to solicit family input		
S	***Specific***	Accessible in hard copy and electronically.
M	***Measurable***	Distributed to 100 percent of families that have passed through our system in the past two years and collected from 30 percent.
A	***Action-Oriented***	Work group includes at least two family members and will design, disseminate, collect, and analyze the survey.
R	***Relevant***	Will be relevant because two family members were a part of the work group.
T	***Time-Bound***	The survey will be developed within 60 days, disseminated within 90 days, and collected within 180 days.
E	***Ethical***	The work group creating the survey will be racially diverse, and family members who participate in the work group will receive compensation for their time. The dissemination plan will ensure that the survey is disseminated to families of all socioeconomic groups and is available in all relevant languages.
R	*Results-Focused*	Survey responses will be analyzed by the work group and shared with all families and agency staff. Improvements based on the survey will be made public by the agency.

Identified Work Area:		
Goal Statement:		
S	***Specific***	
M	***Measurable***	
A	***Action-Oriented***	
R	***Relevant***	
T	***Time-Bound***	
E	***Ethical***	
R	***Results-Focused***	

U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
8660 Cherry Lane
Laurel, MD 20707-4651

Official Business
Penalty for Private Use $300

PRESORTED STANDARD
POSTAGE & FEES PAID
DOJ/OJJDP/GPO
PERMIT NO. G – 26

MAILING LABEL AREA (5” x 2”)
DO NOT PRINT THIS AREA
(INK NOR VARNISH)