

# Maryland School Mental Health Alliance\*

## *School Reentry Information for Teachers and School staff*

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### Definition

Upon release from a juvenile correctional facility, youth must reenroll or reenter the mainstream educational system. This can be a difficult transition period. Teachers and school staff can help make the transition smooth.

### Why do we care?

- Correctional education and mainstream education are often characterized by different philosophies and curriculums. Without collaboration between the two systems, the youth may not receive appropriate educational services.
- Certain youth may require special education programs. Both the school and the detention center must work together to share this information to ensure the youth receives the necessary attention.
- The child may have fallen behind in his or her school work while incarcerated. This may lead to frustration and disengagement with school.
- Reentry may be delayed if the proper information is not transferred between the justice and education system. The youth will then miss out on important educational experiences.
- Reenrollment may be confusing and difficult for the youth and his or her family. It may dissuade the youth from reenrolling entirely. If the youth does not return to school, he or she may commit more criminal acts.

### What can we do about it?

- **Become familiar with the justice system and the reentry process.** Collaboration between the school and justice systems will help to smooth the transitional process. This includes:
  - Contacting the person in charge of the educational services within the correctional institution. The more you become acquainted with one another, the easier the transfer of information will become.
  - Sharing the appropriate information with the correction center once a student is incarcerated.
  - Acquiring the appropriate information from the correction center once a student is released and reenrolling into your school.
  - Be aware of special education needs and share that information.
  - Determine what educational services the child received when incarcerated.
- **Clearly determine your roles and responsibilities in the reentry process.** Both the educational and justice system must state these in order to increase accountability.
- **Reenroll the youth as quickly as possible.** Become informed of the youth's release date from incarceration and prepare for a smooth reentry into school.
- **Involve the youth's family in the reentry process.** Inform the parents or guardians of educational plans.
- **Do not stereotype incarcerated youth as problematic.**
- **Familiarize yourself with the best practices for teaching delinquent youth.**

### Key Resources/Links:

- **The National Center on Education, Disability, and Juvenile justice:** *Transition plans:* <http://www.edjj.org/focus/TransitionAfterCare/index.html>
- **Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention:**

- *Best practices for serving court involved youth with learning, attention, and behavioral disabilities.*  
<http://cecp.air.org/juvenilejustice/docs/Promising%20and%20Preferred%20Procedures.pdf>
- *Overcoming barriers to school reentry:* [www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/ojjdp/fs200403.pdf](http://www.ncjrs.org/pdffiles1/ojjdp/fs200403.pdf)
- **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>
- **U.S. Department of Justice: Office of Justice Programs: Reentry.**
  - *Federal and national resources:* <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/reentry/fnr/nr.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>

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