

## REENTRY: FAMILY AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

### Topic

In this video, Jeannette Bocanegra-Simon, Executive Director of Justice for Families, (J4F), describes how families and communities can support successful reentry of justice-involved youth. Reentry is a process that includes preparing and planning for youth who have been in out-of-home placements to transition back to their home communities. Family members and the larger community can play an important role in the youth's successful return. Supporting youth through a welcoming attitude, employment opportunities, and the chance to develop or strengthen positive relationships, are just some of the ways that families and communities can help returning youth thrive.

### Relevance of Topic to System-Involved Youth

Meaningful family engagement benefits everyone involved with the juvenile justice system. Research in the juvenile justice, education, physical and mental health, and child welfare fields demonstrates that engaging the families of the youth served in these systems is an essential component of achieving desired outcomes for children and improved quality of life for the entire community. When families are effectively engaged, youth and families are more likely to engage and remain engaged in services, and recidivism is reduced (youth are less likely to engage in criminal behavior in the future). In addition, staff morale and satisfaction are increased, and burnout and turnover are reduced within the organization.

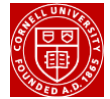
### Relevance to Youth with Disabilities

Youth with disabilities are at greater risk for involvement with the juvenile justice system and are less likely to be served well by this system, than are youth without disabilities. Family engagement has benefits for all young people, and youth with disabilities may need even higher levels of parental, family/support system and community engagement and advocacy on their behalf. Family engagement and community support help prevent out-of-home placement, reduce harm and trauma for those in system settings, reduce use of more restrictive levels of treatment and improve opportunities for successful re-entry into the community.

### Recommendations for Creating Systems Change

- Assess the degree to which policies, programs and practices effectively engage families around discharge planning as early as possible before release.
- Work with families to plan for reentry and help them identify supports they will need across multiple domains. This may include tangible needs such as clothing and school supplies. Social-emotional support for the returning young person, their siblings, and extended family members may also be necessary. (See the resource link below for a self-guide for youth on developing their own re-entry plan).
- Work across systems within your community to ensure that youth leaving detention or other forms of placement have identification, medical records, school records and other documents necessary for successfully navigating life in the community.
- Provide initial and on-going information to families about specific techniques and structures. This may include daily schedules, communication tools, emotional regulation tools and other effective strategies used in the facility. Youth and families may also need coaching and assistance in understanding how these tools can be used in the home and community settings.
- Collaborate closely with school systems to support youth who are transferring from one school environment to another. This includes ensuring course completion credit moves with the student from one school to the next





and that students who need to recover credit for courses which were not successfully completed receive support in making up those credits. Students may also need assistance in obtaining special education support for their learning needs. (See the resource links below for more information about the education and transition needs of student with disabilities involved in the juvenile justice system).

- Work specifically on a trauma-informed stress management plan for families, so that they will learn to recognize and respond to trauma triggers and responses without calling upon law-enforcement. This can include teaching youth and families problem-solving and conflict resolution skills as well as providing information on local resources for mental health and behavioral support.
- Consider developing a respite program so that youth and families have a safe mechanism for breaks and re-grouping when challenging issues arise.
- Fully engage families and young people in co-creating transition plans and conditions of probation or aftercare.

## Learn More

[Families Unlocking Futures: Solutions to the Crisis in Juvenile Justice](#), Justice for Families,

[Juvenile Justice Information Exchange Reentry Key Issues](#)

[Youth Reentry Task Force of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Coalition Report "Back on Track: Supporting Youth Reentry from Out-of-Home Placement to the Community"](#)

[Reintegration toolkit to assist youth and organizations with reentry](#)

[Guidelines for community and interagency collaboration for youth with disabilities involved in the juvenile justice system](#)

[Guide for youth on developing their own reentry plan and forming a reentry committee](#)

[Toolkit to support student and family engagement in the educational transition process for youth \(from entry into incarceration through aftercare planning\)](#)

## Presenter Information

**Jeannette Bocanegra-Simon** is the Executive Director of Justice for Families, (J4F), a national organization committed to ending the youth incarceration epidemic. J4F is founded and run by parents and families who have experienced the juvenile justice system with their children. Jeannette has more than twenty years of experience as an educational activist and parent organizer. To learn more about Jeannette and J4F, go to [Justice for Families website](#)

