

## THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY ENGAGEMENT: A PARENT'S PERSPECTIVE

### Topic

In this video, Jeannette Bocanegra-Simon, the Executive Director of Justice for Families (J4F) and Grace Bauer-Lubow, J4F Co-Founder and Senior Associate, reflect on their personal experiences of having a child involved with the juvenile justice system. Sue Badeau, J4F's National Director of Training and Technical Assistance also comments on the significance of family engagement in successful reentry of youth.

### Relevance of Topic to System-Involved Youth

Meaningful family engagement benefits everyone involved with the juvenile justice system. When families are engaged in revising policies and practices in juvenile justice and related systems. There are several positive results for youth, families, and the community. For example, youth and families are more likely to engage and remain engaged in services, and youth are less likely to participate in future criminal behavior leading to incarceration. When families are engaged, staff report feeling happier and more satisfied with their jobs and are less likely to leave the job due to high stress (burnout).

### Relevance to Youth with Disabilities

Youth with disabilities are at greater risk of involvement with the juvenile justice system and are less likely to have their needs met by the system. Family engagement has benefits for all young people but is especially important for youth with disabilities (YWD). Families are able to support YWD with advocating for their needs, and this leads to fewer YWD being placed in care outside their homes. Family engagement also helps reduce harm and trauma for those in systems settings and leads to less restrictive treatment settings for youth. When families are engaged, youth involved with the justice system are more likely to successfully reenter the community following incarceration.

### Recommendations for Creating Systems Change

- Assess the degree to which policies, programs, and practices effectively engage families.
- Increase family voice within the system by utilizing Family Focus groups, Family Advisory Councils, Family Navigators, Family Peer-to-Peer programs, and/or hiring family members for paid positions.
- Provide initial and on-going training to all staff regarding effective family engagement.

### Learn More

Justice for Families Resources:

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

[Focus on Youth and Families-](#) Guidebook for leading focus groups with families

Campaign for Youth Justice- [Family Engagement in Juvenile Justice](#)

Juvenile Justice Information Exchange- [Benefits of Family Engagement in Juvenile Justice System](#)

Vera Institute of Justice- [Fact Sheet on Family Engagement in Juvenile Justice](#)



PACER Center- [Family Involvement Youth with Emotional and Behavioral Needs](#)

## Presenter Information

**Jeannette Bocanegra-Simon** is Executive Director of Justice for Families (J4F), a national organization committed to ending the youth incarceration epidemic; she has more than twenty years of experience as an educational activist and parent organizer. J4F is founded and run by parents and families who have experienced the juvenile justice system with their children. **Grace Bauer-Lubow**, J4F Co-Founder and Senior Associate, supports families in building leadership skills through policy and practice reform efforts and brings attention to the need for the family voice and power in the justice system. **Sue Badeau**, J4F's National Director of Training and Technical Assistance, writes and speaks to public and private agencies, prison systems, courts, parent groups and community groups. To learn more about Jeannette, Grace, Sue and J4F, go to [Justice for Families website](#)

