

THE NEED FOR TRANSITION SERVICES FOR CALIFORNIA'S JUVENILE JUSTICE YOUTH

- Reenrollment of youth in schools following discharge from a juvenile correctional facility has been a perennial challenge as schools and school districts have resisted reenrollment of formerly incarcerated youth. One study revealed that In spite of juvenile court orders requiring that they attend school; youth were regularly denied reentry into their home school.ⁱ
- Research has shown that incarcerated youth have trouble transitioning back into public school once released. One study found that one year after institutional release, only 28% of the youth were enrolled in school, 27% had withdrawn, and 45% never re-entered.ⁱⁱ
- “Research shows that juveniles experience high recidivism rates, ranging from 55 to 74 percent. In addition, most youth do not reengage with the educational system after leaving confinement. In New York City it was documented that two-thirds of high school age offenders do not return to school after release. Research in Kentucky showed a 95 percent dropout rate between release and entrance into a public school system or transitional educational center. The key to preventing this, as suggested by some research, is engagement.”ⁱⁱⁱ
- Juvenile Court Schools in California have the highest dropout rate of all schools in the state. California’s juvenile court school population is also disproportionately youth of color, as Latino and African American youth comprised 81% of its enrollment during 2010-2011.^{iv}
- In a recent report to the State Legislature, the California Department of Education revealed that of the 56,492 juvenile detention youth served by Neglected or Delinquent programs only 13,693 (or 24%) “enrolled in their local district school” and only 662 (or 1.2%) “obtained employment”, within 30 calendar days after exit from the facility.
- “It is crucial that students are involved in an appropriate educational program while in the correctional center, and upon release. The incidence of recidivism becomes greater when enrollment is not available soon after release’.....”^v
- Developing a transition plan for students as they move through an institution increases the chances that they will return to school upon release. The need for transition services in correctional programs appears fundamental; however, transition efforts have been one of the most neglected components of juvenile correctional educational programs.^{vi}
- Transition is frequently cited as the most critical component of programming for young offenders.^{vii}
- While providing transition services to youth in the juvenile justice system is a challenge, if educators, policymakers, and researchers meet this challenge they will increase the likelihood of successful transitions and reduced recidivism rates.^{viii}

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- ⁱ “Addressing the Unmet Educational Needs of Children and Youth in the Juvenile Justice and Child Welfare Systems” (2010) Peter Leone, Lois Weinberg).
- ⁱⁱ “1999 Annual Report to the Florida Department of Education: Juvenile Justice Educational Enhancement Program” – Chapter 8 – Transition and Aftercare.
- ⁱⁱⁱ “Transition Toolkit 2.0: Meeting the Educational Needs of Youth Exposed to the Juvenile Justice System” (The National Evaluation and Technical Assistance Center for the Education of Children and Youth Who Are Neglected, Delinquent, or at Risk” (2008)).
- ^{iv} California Department of Education DataQuest Adjusted 2009-10 Grade 9-12 Dropout report all juvenile court schools <http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/dropoutreporting/dropotherschgrade.aspx>. DataQuest Enrollment by Ethnic Designation report all juvenile court schools 2010-11 <http://data1.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/DQ/SchEnrOtherEth2.aspx?TheYear=2010-11&SortBy=a&cCounty=all&cSchType=14>
- ^v “A Summary of Best Practices in School Reentry for Incarcerated Youth Returning Home” (2004) Just Children, Legal Aid Justice Center).
- ^{vi} “1999 Annual Report to the Florida Department of Education: Juvenile Justice Educational Enhancement Program” – Chapter 8 – Transition and Aftercare.
- ^{vii} “Transition Practices for Adjudicated Youth with E/BDs and Related Disabilities” (2010) Heather Griller Clark, Deanne Unruh.
- ^{viii} “Practices in Transition for Youth in the Juvenile Justice System” Griller Clark, H., Rutherford, R. B., & Quinn, M. M. (2004). *Practices in transition for youth in the juvenile justice system*. In D. Cheney (Ed.). *Transition of secondary students with emotional or behavioral disabilities: Current approaches for positive outcomes*. Arlington, VA: Council for Children with Behavioral Disorders/Division of Career Development and Transition.