

# Family Involvement in the Juvenile Justice System

Note: This is a resource which was featured on our previous Collaborative for Change website. The Collaborative for Change website has been retired but we have housed this resource as a PDF document. The document will remain as is and is no longer being updated as of September 2016.

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# Family Involvement in the Juvenile Justice System

Youth with mental health and substance use disorders come in contact with the juvenile justice system every day. Combinations of mental illness and substance use disorders are often referred to as behavioral health problems and, in fact, youth with behavioral health problems are overrepresented in the juvenile justice system.

The reasons for contact with the juvenile justice system vary. Sometimes, it is the result of behavior that brings a youth to the attention of law enforcement. Other times, school officials who are convinced that the youth's behavior or truancy patterns require intervention refer the youth to the juvenile justice system. And in other cases, parents or legal guardians who run out of options for handling their child's behavioral health needs may act on the hope that the legal system can help them get the services and supports they need to care for and supervise their child ([Osher & Hunt, 2002](#)).

Regardless of how a youth becomes associated with the juvenile justice system, involving families throughout the experience often leads to positive outcomes for youth, including those with behavioral health needs. Treatment interventions that actively engage the youth and their family are known to be the most effective. If rehabilitation and behavioral change are the goals of the juvenile justice system, family-centered protocols and interventions are essential.

To facilitate involvement, families need information, training, and support at all stages of their child's experience with the juvenile justice system ([Osher & Hunt, 2002](#)). At the same time, juvenile justice systems need to improve policies, procedures, and staff training opportunities to better engage and involve families throughout their involvement with the system.

## Overview

Family involvement is critical for youth with behavioral health disorders who are involved with the juvenile justice system. Research in best practices for prevention, intervention, and aftercare services for juveniles calls for the participation of, education of, and supports for biological parents, surrogates, or guardians to ensure that families are engaged in the process ([Garfinkel, 2010](#)).

The adversarial nature of the juvenile justice system often intimidates families, especially if they are unfamiliar with the system and anxious about the future of their child ([Osher & Hunt, 2002](#)). By the time many families reach the juvenile justice system, they are quite often in crisis. If families are unfamiliar with what to expect and are not provided essential information about the process, the likelihood of their cooperating and participating in the process, and effectively advocating for their child, is low. At the same time, juvenile justice system staff often don't understand the perspective of the family, and often lack the skills to effectively engage families as partners ([Skowrya & Coccozza, 2007](#)).

To address this situation, families need information, training, and support to help them become knowledgeable about the juvenile justice system and effective advocates for their children. Likewise, juvenile justice systems need to ensure that their policies and procedures support family involvement, and that staff are trained to better understand the family perspective, the benefits of family involvement, and specific strategies for family engagement.

## History

In many ways, the children's mental health system led the way on the issue of family involvement. The federal Child and Adolescent Service System Program (CASSP), created in 1984, had, as one of its guiding principles, families as full partners in planning, delivering, and evaluating children's mental health services ([Pennell, Shapiro & Spigner, 2011](#), p. 12). Emerging from this work was the Systems of Care approach, which recognized that children with mental health disorders end up in all child-serving systems (not just the mental health system) and that these systems need to collaborate in order to best serve youth and their family. Systems of Care values embraced strength-based care, interagency collaboration, child-youth- and-family involvement, cultural competence, and community-based services ([Pennell, Shapiro & Spigner, 2011](#)). As more and more communities across the country embraced the Systems of Care approach, this philosophy was introduced to organizations outside of children's mental health. At the same time, more and more youth with mental health disorders were being identified in juvenile justice systems and settings. The push for greater family involvement in the juvenile justice system began to take hold.

While the push over the last twenty-five years to increase family involvement at both the individual and systems level has led to the development of a clear framework for family involvement in the children's mental health system, no such framework yet exists for the juvenile justice system. However, there is increasing recognition on the part of juvenile justice administrators and leaders that family involvement is one of the most important issues they face, and that families are critical to the system's efforts to successfully rehabilitate youth.

## Benefits of Family Involvement

Family involvement is the process of engaging and involving families in decision-making. Involving families has the potential to benefit the youth, the family, and the juvenile justice system.

The supportive involvement of family members can help youth by:

- Reducing anxiety
- Reinforcing the importance of treatment, including the proper use of medications
- Providing youth with an advocate who can help them articulate their needs
- Increasing the chances of a smooth transition home once their involvement with the juvenile justice system ends

Families benefit by:

- Knowing where their child is and what is happening to them
- Understanding the process and expectations of the juvenile justice system so they can make more informed decisions about their child
- Feeling valued for the important information that they can share about their child, especially strengths and needs; diagnostic, treatment, and medication history; typical patterns of behavior; and educational background and status

The juvenile justice system benefits by:

- Gaining important and reliable knowledge and insights about a youth from family members that otherwise might not be available or known to juvenile justice system staff
- Establishing working partnerships with families that increase the likelihood that families and youth will follow through with service plans
- Building a sense of shared responsibility for youth and improving agency culture and staff morale

Meaningful partnerships between families and juvenile justice system professionals, based on a mutual understanding and respect for each side's perspective, can increase the likelihood of positive outcomes for youth. Furthermore, research indicates that the most effective treatment interventions for youth with behavioral health needs (such as Multi-Systemic Therapy, Functional Family Therapy, Brief Strategic Family Therapy, and Family Integrated Transition program) all recognize the family as the critical agent of change for improving behavior and actively engaging the youth and family in the treatment plans. Effective treatment reduces the likelihood of continued juvenile justice system involvement and increases the chances of positive life outcomes for youth.

## Barriers to Family Involvement

Multiple factors can affect the extent to which families participate in the juvenile justice system. Stigma associated with mental illness; stereotypical attitudes about families causing their child's problems; and policies and procedures that fail to support family participation can all be barriers to involvement. In addition, individual family situations – such as a lack of knowledge about the system, a lack of resources to support involvement, and the physical or mental health needs of a parent or family member – can deter involvement ([Osher & Hunt, 2002](#)).

A 2011 series of focus groups and surveys of family members and juvenile justice stakeholders was convened to better understand the concerns and frustrations of families involved with the juvenile justice system. These sessions revealed the following:

- Families and juvenile justice system stakeholders both acknowledge that the juvenile justice system often blames parents for their children's behavior and this lack of trust makes it difficult to engage families.

- Families and juvenile justice system representatives agree that families lack basic information about the process of the court system, their legal rights, and the role of the various players in the system, which prevents effectively addressing any treatment needs the youth presents.
- Families and systems stakeholders also realize that families often lack the economic and social supports necessary to meet the needs of their children and to fully participate in existing activities offered by the system ([Campaign for Youth Justice, 2013](#)).

A similar set of meetings and focus groups was undertaken in Pennsylvania to better understand both the family perspective and the juvenile justice system’s perspective on family involvement. This work uncovered several key themes, including:

- Respect should be the basis for all interactions between families and the system.
- Court policy and practice must provide opportunities for family involvement.
- Leadership across agencies must ensure that policies support family involvement.

## Guidance from the Field

### Guidance for Families

Families often receive little guidance as to how they can effectively participate in the juvenile justice system process, and few accommodations are made to include them ([Garfinkel, 2010](#)). Further, families often come to the juvenile justice system in a state of panic or crisis. They may be experiencing a mix of emotions, such as:

- Fear, at the prospect of what is happening to their child
- Helplessness, because they don’t understand the system and feel unable to protect their child
- Anxiety, over the lack of knowledge about what to expect from the juvenile justice system
- Relief, especially if their child has a behavioral health disorder and they have been unable to care for their child

Most families, when adequately supported and engaged, can work in full partnership with juvenile justice system professionals to achieve better outcomes for youth. To do this, families need education, training, and support so that they can become:

- More knowledgeable about the juvenile justice system and its responsibilities
- Better able to understand, predict, and participate in the process
- Effective individual advocates for their own children
- Effective system advocates for all children

This progression of family involvement involves not only Information and Training, but also Family Advocacy, as described below.

## Information and Training

Family members often lack basic information about the juvenile justice system and their rights and responsibilities as parents of a justice-involved youth with behavioral health needs. Over the last ten years, states and communities across the country have developed resources to better educate and inform families on the juvenile justice system, help families navigate the process, and support families in advocating for their children while they are involved with the system. These resources include:

- Pamphlets, guides, and handbooks designed to help families and youth understand the juvenile justice system, their rights and responsibilities, how decisions are made, and ways to participate in decision-making processes
- Training programs for families that:
  - provide important information about the juvenile justice system and the roles and responsibilities of the staff who work in that system
  - help families develop a clear understanding of what to expect from the system, from arrest to placement
  - help families understand how to better work with the juvenile justice system on behalf of their child
- Peer support groups or the use of parent advocates within the juvenile justice system to help new parents understand and navigate the juvenile justice system
- Networks of family members who are trained and prepared to speak to juvenile justice system staff about what it is like to be the parent of a child with a behavioral health disorder who becomes involved with the juvenile justice system and to offer tips for how to better engage families

## KEY WEBSITES

The National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice developed the [Family Involvement Resource Inventory: An Overview of Resources for Family, Youth, and Staff](#), which lists publications and resources that address the barriers that families and caretakers may face when a youth is involved in the juvenile justice system, and provides advocacy tips and information on how best to navigate the justice system.

The [National Juvenile Justice Network](#) has a searchable [online library](#) that includes resources on a variety of juvenile justice issues, including family involvement.

## EXAMPLES FROM THE FIELD

Published by the Connecticut Center for Effective Practice, [The Connecticut Juvenile Justice System: A Guide for Youth and Families](#) guides families through the complexities of the Connecticut juvenile justice system by providing answers to frequently asked questions and addressing issues pertaining to the legal rights of youth.

[\*A Family Guide to Pennsylvania's Juvenile Justice System\*](#) was developed by the Family Involvement Committee of the Pennsylvania Council of Chief Juvenile Probation Officers – a committee of family advocates and juvenile justice practitioners – to help families understand Pennsylvania's juvenile justice system and be better prepared to work closely with juvenile justice staff to promote positive outcomes for justice-involved youth.

The Massachusetts Department of Youth Services developed [\*From A Parent's Perspective: A Handbook for Parents of Children Committed to the Massachusetts Department of Youth Services\*](#). This handbook, written by the parent of a youth committed to Massachusetts' Department of Youth Services, serves as a reference guide and provides a general overview of information parents need to know when their child becomes involved with Massachusetts' juvenile justice system.

Developed by the King County Department of Youth Services in Washington, [\*Juvenile Justice 101\*](#) is a program designed to help parents and youth understand the juvenile court process in King County, Washington. The Court Orientation component contains a [video](#) and [resource booklet](#), which describe the juvenile court offender process. For additional information on Juvenile Justice 101, visit [OJJDP Journal of Juvenile Justice – Addressing Family Support Needs in Juvenile Court](#).

A collaboration between the Illinois Children and Family Justice Center, Northwestern University School of Law, and the Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership produced [\*The Juvenile Justice System: A Guide for Families in Illinois\*](#), which explains the rights of parents and their options in the juvenile justice system.

The King County Juvenile Court in Washington developed, with the input and oversight of parents, youth, juvenile court and mental health professionals, the [\*King County Juvenile Justice Resource Booklet: A Guide to Help Your Family Navigate the Juvenile Justice System\*](#). This booklet guides families through the processes of the juvenile court, as well as informs them about available and helpful resources.

The Children and Family Justice Center at Northwestern University presents [\*Know Your Rights: The Basics of Encounters with Law Enforcement\*](#). This training curriculum provides information about how to behave during interactions with law enforcement or other disciplinarians, action steps necessary to navigate out of the juvenile justice system, and resources in Illinois that support advocacy for the rights of youth. *Know Your Rights* is an extension of the work initiated by the Illinois Mental Health and Juvenile Justice Action Network and was intended for emerging educators and youth advocates in Illinois; however, it can be adapted to reflect local laws, policies, and ordinances of [other jurisdictions](#).

Developed by the Maryland Coalition of Families for Children's Mental Health, [\*Navigating the Juvenile Justice System: A Handbook for Families\*](#) is meant to assist families in understanding the juvenile justice system, as well as in participating in the decisions that are made regarding their child.

A collaboration of the Southwest Regional Juvenile Defender Center at the University of Houston Law Center, Texas Appleseed, and Hogg Foundation for Mental Health produced the [\*Navigating the Juvenile Justice System: A Handbook for Juveniles and Their Families\*](#) in 2004. This handbook offers basic information to youth, as well as to parents, grandparents, foster parents, guardians, and other family members or friends of children who have been or may be in trouble with the law.

[\*Navigating the Juvenile Justice System in New Jersey: A Family Guide \(Spanish version\)\*](#) was developed for parents and caregivers by the [New Jersey Parents Caucus, Inc.](#) The guide was created by families involved with the juvenile justice system and is intended to serve as a general overview of the New Jersey juvenile justice process. It provides resources that may be of assistance to anyone who has a child involved in the system. New Jersey also provides a [brochure \(Spanish version\)](#) and [family involvement courses](#) for juvenile justice professionals and family members whose children are involved in the juvenile justice system.

The [\*Ohio Effective Family Engagement Curriculum\*](#), developed by the Ohio Chapter of the Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health, is a PowerPoint training used by parents to train juvenile justice system staff on the importance of engaging parents with children who have mental health needs in the juvenile justice system.

New York City - Interagency Coordinating Council on Youth produced [\*A Parents Resource Guide – Understanding the Maze: If Your Child has Contact with the Law\*](#), which is a brochure to help parents understand New York City's criminal and juvenile justice systems. Included are some answers to pertinent questions that families may have when their child becomes involved with the juvenile justice system.

The [Summit County Juvenile Court](#) in Ohio launched the [Family Resource Center](#) in 2006 to provide youth and families involved in the juvenile justice system with information on services available within the community to increase youth opportunities for success in school, work, and life.

The Texas Juvenile Justice Department produced [\*Understanding the Texas Juvenile Justice Department & the Parents' Bill of Rights\*](#) for families of youth involved in Texas' juvenile justice system. This family guide is intended to encourage families—including those who are reluctant, fearful, or unprepared—to become active partners in their child's rehabilitation.

## CRITICAL RESOURCES

Garfinkel, L. (2001). [\*What parents need to know about children with disabilities in the delinquency system\*](#). College Park, MD: The National Center on Education, Disability and Juvenile Justice.

National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice. (2012). [The role of family in juvenile justice diversion programs for youth with behavioral health needs](#) [webinar]. Delmar, NY: Author.

National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice and The Council of State Governments. (2013). [Family engagement in juvenile justice mental health - Making it real](#) [webinar]. Delmar, NY: Authors.

National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health. (undated). [Juvenile justice – What you need to know?](#) Rockville, MD: National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health.

New Jersey Parents Caucus, Inc. (undated). [NJPC Parents Empowerment Academy](#). Succasunna, NJ: New Jersey Parents Caucus, Inc.

Osher, T., & Huff, B. (2008). [A family guide to getting involved with correctional education](#). Washington, DC: National Evaluation Technical Assistance Center for the Education of Children Who Are Neglected, Delinquent or At Risk.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2008). [How to work effectively with police when youth are in mental health crisis](#). Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

## Family Advocacy

Family members can also become involved in advocating for juvenile justice *system reform* that promotes policy and procedural changes that help *all* families who come in contact with the juvenile justice system.

Examples of how this is happening or can be supported include:

- Advocating for changes to juvenile justice system policy and practice through family-led community-based organizations. Family advocacy groups, working in conjunction with juvenile justice system officials, can sometimes influence the political and policy-making process in ways system representatives alone cannot. The family voice can be a powerful one, especially if it is united with other child-serving systems seeking the same changes.
- Inviting family members to serve on policy or advisory groups, sharing their personal experiences, and helping to change the way families are often viewed and treated in the juvenile justice process
- Asking family members to conduct presentations or training for juvenile justice staff, during which they share their personal experiences and stories, as well as their ideas for what families need and want from the juvenile justice system

## KEY WEBSITES

[Mental Health America](#) is a community-based network dedicated to helping all Americans achieve wellness by living mentally healthier lives by advocating for changes in mental health and wellness policy; educating the public and providing critical information; and delivering urgently needed mental health and wellness programs and services.

The [National Alliance on Mental Illness](#) (NAMI) is the foundation for hundreds of NAMI state organizations, NAMI affiliates, and volunteer leaders who work in local communities across the country to raise awareness and provide essential and free education, advocacy, and support group programs.

[The National Federation of Families for Children’s Mental Health](#) is a national family-run organization linking more than 120 chapters and state organizations focused on the issues of children and youth with emotional, behavioral, or mental health needs and their families. The National Federation of Families has a collection of resources, tools, and information family members can use in the work that they do to advocate for youth in the juvenile justice system.

The [National Juvenile Justice Network](#) has a searchable [online library](#) that includes resources on a variety of juvenile justice issues, including family involvement.

The [Supporting Partnerships for Success](#) is a Family Advocacy Toolkit developed by the Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health - Colorado Chapter that provides parents, family advocates, and systems professionals in Colorado with information on community resources and best practices for youth in the juvenile justice system experiencing mental health as well as co-occurring substance use issues. The Toolkit is divided into two sections: the Family Advocate Tool and the System Professional Tool. The [Family Advocate Tool](#) provides resources that individual family advocates and advocates working within family organizations can use in their work with youth experiencing mental health, as well as co-occurring mental health and substance use issues, while in the juvenile justice system and their families.

## EXAMPLES FROM THE FIELD

The Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana developed the [Making Your Voice Heard: Family Advocacy Handbook for Parents and Other Concerned People with Children in Custody in the Juvenile Justice System](#), an advocacy handbook intended for families who have youth ages 10-21 in the juvenile justice system. The hope is that the information and suggestions in this handbook will help parents to better understand the juvenile justice system so that they can be a strong voice and advocate for their child.

## CRITICAL RESOURCES

Fassler, D. (2003.) [Advocating for your child: 25 tips for parents](#). Arlington, VA: National Alliance on Mental Illness.

Henderson, W. (2010). [An advocate's guide to meaningful family partnerships: Tips from the field](#). Washington, DC: National Juvenile Justice Network.

National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice. (2012). [The role of family in juvenile justice diversion programs for youth with behavioral health needs](#) [webinar]. Delmar, NY: Author.

National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice and The Council of State Governments. (2013). [Family engagement in juvenile justice mental health - Making it real](#) [webinar]. Delmar, NY: Authors.

## Guidance for Juvenile Justice Systems

While better educating family members about the juvenile justice system is essential, it is not the only thing that needs to occur. The juvenile justice system must also institute policy and practices that more actively and meaningfully involve families at both the individual client level and the systems level.

Juvenile justice staff often recognize the positive impact that family involvement can have on youth outcomes. However, staff can be frustrated by the lack of practical guidance and procedures available to them for engaging families and making their roles effective and meaningful ([Luckenbill, 2012](#)). One way to address this is by helping staff develop skills to better engage and involve families and to facilitate families' involvement in their children's care and treatment. Training should be available that:

- Helps juvenile justice system staff better understand the perspective and backgrounds of families whose children become involved with the justice system, highlighting the particular challenges faced by parents who have a child with a behavioral health disorder
- Provides staff with practical instruction to help them understand factors that enhance and impede effective family involvement
- Cultivates specific family engagement skills and tools that can increase the quality of interaction with families
- Teaches staff how to solicit valuable information and knowledge from families, recognizing that they are often the most reliable source of information about their child's strengths, needs, and experiences
- Emphasizes the value of mutually respectful partnerships with families
- Includes family members as trainers

In addition to creating more training opportunities for juvenile justice staff, the juvenile justice system can institute policy and procedural changes to improve the way the system works with families. Examples include:

- Creating a welcoming environment for families by training staff to be professional and courteous, making waiting or family meeting rooms more physically comfortable, and providing qualified translators as necessary
- Developing family-friendly publications that clearly explain key features of the process, system, or facility, and providing translated versions of these documents that correspond to the youth populations that the systems serves
- Recruiting family members to serve on planning or advisory groups to provide input and offer perspective on how planned policy or procedural changes might affect families
- Hiring family members within the juvenile justice system to serve as liaisons, case managers, advocates, peer support mentors, and trainers
- Engaging family advocacy groups in efforts to advocate for juvenile justice system reforms, resources, and improvements
- Soliciting family input via focus groups, satisfaction surveys, and town hall-type meetings on how engaged families feel they are in the process and how satisfied they are with the process or the system
- Helping families establish connections to other families through peer support groups. Parents can share common experiences and exchange advice and suggestions for how to handle challenging situations.
- Changing visitation policies at facilities to make it easier and more convenient for families to visit their children.

## KEY WEBSITES

The [Family Justice Program](#) run by the Vera Institute of Justice provides training and technical assistance to help community-based organizations and government agencies — such as corrections, parole and probation, and juvenile justice entities — adopt case management styles that are strength based and family focused.

The [National Juvenile Justice Network](#) has a searchable [online library](#) that includes resources on a variety of juvenile justice issues, including family involvement.

The [Supporting Partnerships for Success](#) is a Family Advocacy Toolkit developed by the Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health - Colorado Chapter that provides parents, family advocates, or systems professionals in Colorado with information on community resources and best practice information for youth in the juvenile justice system experiencing mental health as well as co-occurring mental health and substance use issues. The Toolkit is divided into two sections: the Family Advocate Tool and the System Professional Tool.

The [System Professional Tool](#) provides resources for systems professionals working with youth experiencing mental health, as well as co-occurring mental health and substance use issues in the juvenile justice system.

## EXAMPLES FROM THE FIELD

[Family Involvement in Pennsylvania's Juvenile Justice System](#), developed by the Pennsylvania Family Involvement Subcommittee, is a monograph that identifies strategies and models to support family involvement in the juvenile justice system.

The Center for Juvenile Justice Training and Research developed, with the guidance of the Family Involvement Committee of the Pennsylvania Council of Chief Juvenile Probation Officers, the [Family Involvement in Pennsylvania's Juvenile Justice System](#) (FIJJ) curriculum. The curriculum offers practical instruction on the emerging practice of family engagement and involvement in juvenile justice.

## CRITICAL RESOURCES

Arya, N. (2013). [Family comes first: A workbook to transform the justice system by partnering with families - Executive summary](#). Washington, DC: Campaign for Youth Justice.

CrossBear, S. & LeGore, S. (2014). [Family Involvement in Child-Serving Systems and the Need for Cross-Systems Collaboration](#). Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Luckenbill, W. (2012). [Innovation brief: Strengthening the role of families in juvenile justice](#). Chicago, IL: Models for Change.

National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice. (2012). [The role of family in juvenile justice diversion programs for youth with behavioral health needs](#) [webinar]. Delmar, NY: Author.

National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice and The Council of State Governments. (2013). [Family engagement in juvenile justice mental health - Making it real](#) [webinar]. Delmar, NY: Authors.

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention OJJDP. (2013). [Family listening sessions executive summary](#). Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Osher, T., & Huff, B. (undated). [Working with families of children in the juvenile justice and corrections systems: A guide for education program leaders, principals, and building administrators](#). Washington, DC: National Evaluation and Technical Assistance Center for the Education of Children and Youth who are Neglected, Delinquent, and At-Risk.

Osher, T., & Hunt, P. (2002). [Research and program brief: Involving families of youth who are in contact with the juvenile justice system](#). Delmar, NY: National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice.

Pennell, J., Shapiro, C., & Spinger, C. (2011). [Safety, fairness, stability: Repositioning juvenile justice and child welfare to engage families and communities](#). Washington, DC: Center for Juvenile Justice Reform.

Vera Institute of Justice. (2011). [Why ask about family? A guide for corrections](#). New York, NY: Author.

## All Resources: Family Involvement in the Juvenile Justice System

### KEY WEBSITES

The [Family Justice Program](#) run by the Vera Institute of Justice provides training and technical assistance to help community-based organizations and government agencies—such as corrections, parole and probation, and juvenile justice entities—adopt case management styles that are strength based and family focused.

[Mental Health America](#) is a community-based network dedicated to helping all Americans achieve wellness by living mentally healthier lives by advocating for changes in mental health and wellness policy; educating the public and providing critical information; and delivering urgently needed mental health and wellness programs and services.

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The [National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health](#) is a national family-run organization linking more than 120 chapters and state organizations focused on the issues of children and youth with emotional, behavioral, or mental health needs and their families. The National Federation of Families has a collection of resources, tools, and information family members can use in the work that they do to advocate for youth in the juvenile justice system.

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## EXAMPLES FROM THE FIELD

Published by the Connecticut Center for Effective Practice, [The Connecticut Juvenile Justice System: A Guide for Youth and Families](#) guides families through the complexities of the Connecticut juvenile justice system. The guide answers frequently asked questions and addresses issues pertaining to the legal rights of youth.

[A Family Guide to Pennsylvania's Juvenile Justice System](#) was developed by the Family Involvement Committee of the Pennsylvania Council of Chief Juvenile Probation Officers – a committee of family advocates and juvenile justice practitioners – to help families understand Pennsylvania's juvenile justice system and be better prepared to work closely with juvenile justice staff to promote positive outcomes for justice-involved youth.

The [Family Involvement in Juvenile Justice curriculum](#) offers practical instruction on the emerging practice of family engagement and involvement in juvenile justice. The contents of the curriculum are aligned with the findings of the *Family Involvement in Pennsylvania's Juvenile Justice System* monograph (see below).

[Family Involvement in Pennsylvania's Juvenile Justice System](#) identifies strategies and models to support family involvement in the juvenile justice system. This monograph was developed by the Family Involvement Subcommittee of the Mental Health/Juvenile Justice Workgroup for Models for Change – Pennsylvania and the Family Involvement Workgroup of the Pennsylvania Council of Chief Juvenile Probation Officers Balanced & Restorative Justice Implementation Committee.

The National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice developed the [Family Involvement Resource Inventory: An Overview of Resources for Family, Youth, and Staff](#) which lists publications and resources that address the barriers that families and caretakers may face when a youth is involved in the juvenile justice system, and provides advocacy tips and information on how best to navigate the justice system.

The Summit County Juvenile Court in Ohio launched the [Family Resource Center](#) in 2006 to provide youth and families involved in the juvenile justice system with information on services available within the community to increase youth opportunities for success in school, work, and life.

The Massachusetts Department of Youth Services developed [From a Parent's Perspective: A Handbook for Parents of Children Committed to the Massachusetts Department of Youth Services](#). This handbook, written by the parent of a youth committed to Massachusetts' Department of Youth Services, serves as a reference guide and provides a general overview of information parents need to know when their child becomes involved with Massachusetts' juvenile justice system.

[A Guide for the Juvenile Justice System in Bristol County: Family Support Resources](#) was developed by the Massachusetts team for the Models for Change Mental Health/Juvenile Justice Policy Academy-Action Network, and was made possible through a partnership with the Parent Information Network, a BAMSI Program funded by the Department of Mental Health. It outlines city-specific as well as statewide agencies and services available to support justice-involved youth and their families.

Developed by the King County Department of Youth Services in Washington, [Juvenile Justice 101](#) is a program designed to help parents and youth understand the juvenile court process in King County, Washington. The Court Orientation component contains a [video](#) and resource booklet (see below), which describe the juvenile court offender process. For more information on Juvenile Justice 101, see "Juvenile Justice 101: Addressing Family Support Needs in Juvenile Court" in the [Fall 2012 issue of OJJDP's Journal of Juvenile Justice](#).

A collaboration of the Illinois Children and Family Justice Center, Northwestern University School of Law, and the Illinois Children's Mental Health Partnership produced [The Juvenile Justice System: A Guide for Families in Illinois](#), which explains the rights of parents and their options in the juvenile justice system.

With the input and oversight of parents, youth, and juvenile court and mental health professionals, the King County Juvenile Court in Washington developed the [King County Juvenile Justice Resource Booklet: A Guidebook to Help Your Family Navigate the Juvenile Justice System](#). This booklet guides families through the processes of the juvenile court, as well as informs them about available and helpful resources.

The Children and Family Justice Center at Northwestern University presents [Know Your Rights: The Basics of Encounters with Law Enforcement](#). This training curriculum provides information about how to behave during interactions with law enforcement or other disciplinarians, action steps necessary to navigate out of the juvenile justice system, and resources in Illinois that support advocacy for the rights of youth. *Know Your Rights* is an extension of the work initiated by the Illinois Mental Health and Juvenile Justice Action Network and was intended for

emerging educators and youth advocates in Illinois; however, it can be adapted to reflect local laws, policies, and ordinances of [other jurisdictions](#).

The Juvenile Justice Project of Louisiana developed the [Making Your Voice Heard: Family Advocacy Handbook for Parents and Other Concerned People with Children in Custody in the Juvenile Justice System](#), an advocacy handbook intended for families who have youth ages 10-21 in the juvenile justice system. The hope is that the information and suggestions in this handbook will help parents to better understand the juvenile justice system so that they can be a strong voice and advocate for their child.

Developed by the Maryland Coalition of Families for Children's Mental Health, [Navigating the Juvenile Justice System: A Handbook for Families](#) is meant to assist families in understanding the juvenile justice system, as well as in participating in the decisions that are made regarding their child.

A collaboration of the Southwest Regional Juvenile Defender Center at the University of Houston Law Center, Texas Appleseed, and Hogg Foundation for Mental Health produced the [Navigating the Juvenile Justice System: A Handbook for Juveniles and Their Families in 2004](#). *This handbook offers basic information to youth, as well as to parents, grandparents, foster parents, guardians, and other family members or friends of children who have been or may be in trouble with the law.*

[Navigating the Juvenile Justice System in New Jersey: A Family Guide \(Spanish version\)](#) was developed for parents and caregivers by the [New Jersey Parents Caucus, Inc.](#) The guide was created by families involved with the juvenile justice system and is intended to serve as a general overview of the New Jersey juvenile justice process. It provides resources that may be of assistance to anyone who has a child involved in the system. New Jersey also provides a [brochure \(Spanish version\)](#) and [family involvement courses](#) for juvenile justice professionals and family members whose children are involved in the juvenile justice system.

The [Ohio Effective Family Engagement Curriculum](#), developed by the Ohio Chapter of the Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health, is a PowerPoint training used by parents to train juvenile justice system staff on the importance of engaging parents with children who have mental health needs in the juvenile justice system.

New York City - Interagency Coordinating Council on Youth produced [A Parent's Resource Guide – Understanding the Maze: If Your Child has Contact with the Law](#), which is a brochure to help parents understand New York City's criminal and juvenile justice systems. Included are some answers to pertinent questions that families may have when their child becomes involved with the juvenile justice system.

The Texas Juvenile Justice Department produced [Understanding the Texas Juvenile Justice Department & the Parents' Bill of Rights](#) for families of youth involved in Texas' juvenile justice

system. This family guide is intended to encourage families—including those who are reluctant, fearful, or unprepared—to become active partners in their child's rehabilitation.

## CRITICAL RESOURCES

Arya, N. (2013). [Family comes first: A workbook to transform the justice system by partnering with families - Executive summary](#). Washington, DC: Campaign for Youth Justice

CrossBear, S. & LeGore, S. (2014). [Family involvement in child-serving systems and the need for cross-systems collaboration](#). Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Fassler, D. (2003.) [Advocating for your child: 25 tips for parents](#). Arlington, VA: National Alliance on Mental Illness.

Garkinkel, L. (2010). [Improving family involvement for juvenile offenders with emotional/behavioral disorder](#). *Behavioral Disorders*, 36(1), 52-60.

Garfinkel, L. (2001). [What parents need to know about children with disabilities in the delinquency system](#). College Park, MD: The National Center on Education, Disability and Juvenile Justice.

Henderson, W. (2010). [An advocate's guide to meaningful family partnerships: Tips from the field](#). Washington, DC: National Juvenile Justice Network.

Luckenbill, W. (2012). [Innovation brief: Strengthening the role of families in juvenile justice](#). Chicago, IL: Models for Change.

National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice. (2012). [The role of family in juvenile justice diversion programs for youth with behavioral health needs](#) [webinar]. Delmar, NY: Author.

National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice and The Council of State Governments. (2013). [Family engagement in juvenile justice mental health - Making it real](#) [webinar]. Delmar, NY: Authors.

National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health. (n.d.). [Juvenile justice – What you need to know?](#) Rockville, MD: National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health.

New Jersey Parents Caucus, Inc. (n.d.). [NJPC Parents Empowerment Academy](#). Succasunna, NJ: New Jersey Parents Caucus, Inc.

Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention OJJDP. (2013). [\*OJJDP family listening sessions: Executive summary\*](#). Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Osher, T., & Huff, B. (2008). [\*A family guide to getting involved with correctional education\*](#). Washington, DC: National Evaluation Technical Assistance Center for the Education of Children Who Are Neglected, Delinquent or At Risk.

Osher, T., & Huff, B. (n.d.). [\*Working with families of children in the juvenile justice and corrections systems: A guide for education program leaders, principals, and building administrators\*](#). Washington, DC: National Evaluation and Technical Assistance Center for the Education of Children and Youth who are Neglected, Delinquent, and At-Risk.

Osher, T., & Hunt, P. (2002). [\*Research and program brief: Involving families of youth who are in contact with the juvenile justice system\*](#). Delmar, NY: National Center for Mental Health and Juvenile Justice.

Pennell, J., Shapiro, C., & Spinger, C. (2011). [\*Safety, fairness, stability: Repositioning juvenile justice and child welfare to engage families and communities\*](#). Washington, DC: Center for Juvenile Justice Reform.

National Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health. (2008). [\*How to work effectively with police when youth are in mental health crisis\*](#). Rockville, MD: Author.

Skowrya, K. & Coccozza, J. (2007). [\*Blueprint for change: A comprehensive model for the identification and treatment of youth with mental health needs in contact with the juvenile justice system\*](#). Delmar, NY: Policy Research Associates, Inc.

Vera Institute of Justice. (2011). [\*Why ask about family? A guide for corrections\*](#). New York, NY: Author.