

Exploring Efforts to Provide Coordinated Reentry Services to Youth Transcript

Cassy Blakely:

Good morning, we are excited to have you joining us for today's Second Chance Month webinar, focused on coordinated reentry efforts. Next slide.

Cassy Blakely:

We will be recording today's webinar. The recording and slides will be available on the National Reentry Resource Center's website in mid-May. If you do not wish to have your audio or video shown during this session, just keep yourself on mute and off camera. Next slide.

Cassy Blakely:

We are happy to support and partner with the Bureau of Justice Assistance Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention and the Second Chance Act Month events, particularly those focused on juvenile justice involving young people. Here at the American Institutes for Research, we support the Corrections and Community Engagement Technical Assistance Center, which provides training and technical assistance to a number of Second Chance Act grantees across the country. We are excited to bring this wonderful panel of speakers to you today. Next slide.

Cassy Blakely:

We invite you to stay involved and learn more about the Bureau of Justice Assistance and Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's commitment to second chances for all young people. Next slide.

Cassy Blakely:

You can do that by visiting the National Reentry Resource Center website, which I'll put here in the chat for you in just a moment or looking for the following hashtags on social media. We invite you to share your local events using these hashtags as well. With that, in the next slide, I will turn it over to my colleague, Ms. Julia Alanen, at the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Julia Alanen:

Thank you, Cassy. Good morning, everyone. Thanks for joining us for Second Chance Month and helping us celebrate some of the important and exciting reentry learning and successes that we're seeing across the nation, and also raising up the voices of youth with lived experience and front-line juvenile justice professionals like those on this webinar. We are so glad to have you here for this session.

Julia Alanen:

My name is Julia Alanen, and I'm a program manager with the U.S. Justice Department's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. I think most of you already know that OJJDP is a grantmaking component, and that we're committed to supporting your efforts to continuously improve the juvenile justice system. I'm a member of OJJDP's Intervention Division, which funds system-level demonstration projects. Those are projects that address some critical need and that are standing up innovative evidence-based and promising new programs, policies, and practices that we believe have a high likelihood of proving successful and sustainable, and then serving as replicable and scalable models.

Julia Alanen:

You're going to hear today from experts in California, North Carolina and Utah, who are currently in various stages of implementing just such demonstration projects. Each of their projects is supported in part by the Second Chance Act funding stream, and each of these grantees is also supported by the fabulous team of expert training and technical assistance coaches at American Institutes for Research, AIR, which is the DOJ-funded national TTA provider for Second Chance reentry work.

Julia Alanen:

As you all know, throughout the process of preparing for release from secure confinement or out-of-home placements and then reintegrating back into their communities during the reentry process, many of our young people confront complex needs and challenges associated with everything from housing and homelessness to education and employment, mental health care needs, substance use, gang involvement and much, much more. If left unaddressed, these needs and challenges can impact the success of our young people's reentry, and even influence whether they reoffend.

Julia Alanen:

Signed into law in 2008 and reauthorized in 2018, the Second Chance Act authorizes federal grants to state, local and tribal government agencies, and also to non-profit organizations, to provide reentry services to youth, to support corrections and supervision practices that aim to improve youth outcomes, to reduce recidivism, and of course to improve public safety. OJJDP's Second Chance Act Youth Reentry Program encourages collaboration between state and

local agency and community-based organizations to address these challenges that reentry and recidivism reduction pose for youth returning to their communities from residential or correctional facilities.

Julia Alanen:

We've invited three of more than 30 active Second Chance Act Youth Reentry Program grantees currently funded by OJJDP to tell you about their respective efforts to meaningfully support youth throughout this challenging reentry process. They'll also share their strategies for developing, implementing, and adapting their approaches, for expanding pilot projects, establishing key partnerships, and sustaining their reentry work over the long term. I hope that this panel will inspire and inform folks in other jurisdictions and may even motivate some of you to pursue fiscal year 2022 Second Chance Act youth reentry funding opportunities that could benefit your youth, families and communities.

Julia Alanen:

Our Second Chance reentry solicitation is currently open. We'll drop a note, a link to it, in the chat box at some point. If you're interested in pursuing funding, please note that this opportunity closes on May 31st. There are multiple categories, so whether you're with a state agency, a local agency, a tribal juvenile justice agency or a nonprofit, all are eligible and encouraged to apply.

Julia Alanen:

For expediency purposes today, the panelists will introduce themselves. Because we have an ambitious agenda and want to ensure we have plenty of time to hear from all three sets of expert panelists, you are also welcomed to type questions into the chat box as we go, and we'll reserve some Q&A time at the end as well. Next slide.

Julia Alanen:

With that, I'm going to hand off to our first panelist. Joining us from Alameda County, California, Deputy Sheppard. Thank you for being with us today. The floor is yours.

Terrence Sheppard:

Thank you for having me. I am Deputy Probation Officer Sheppard. I work for the Alameda County Probation Department. I am a 20-year veteran in juvenile justice. Thank you for having me again. Next slide, please.

Terrence Sheppard:

Okay, so what is the WE RISE project? It's intensive case management and life coaching support for gang-affiliated youth returning to Oakland from Juvenile Hall. Our program isn't run out of our camp, which we have one. It's actually run out of our Juvenile Hall, and it's geared towards high-level to very high-level offenders. Next slide, please.

Terrence Sheppard:

Service is delivered by one dedicated deputy probation officer and one dedicated life coach. The reasoning behind that was for youth to not have to interface with so many different folks during the duration of their probation. We wanted to streamline it to give them an opportunity to get to know the probation officer, myself, and the life coach, who is Mr. Juan Campos. Next.

Terrence Sheppard:

Okay. The program goals, the life coach and the DPO work together to help the youth achieve the following goals: Meet the terms and conditions of their probation, reintegrate into school successfully and attend school regularly, strengthen relationships with family and social groups that have a positive influence. Now, that's a very important part, because oftentimes the positive influence isn't in the home. It could be a rec supervisor, or it could be someone that they've come in contact within the community who they really have a liking to. We try to seek out those people to make sure that this process works smoothly.

Terrence Sheppard:

We weaken relationships with social groups that have a negative influence. One of the ways that we do that is because me and Mr. Campos, we were born and raised in City of Oakland. We know a lot of the different players in the different parts of the city, so we're able to influence the youth participation in the program directly and indirectly by communicating with other groups in the community, to allow this youth to rehabilitate in the community and participate in the program without a whole lot of negativities from other folks in the community. Next.

Terrence Sheppard:

Avoid violent and illegal activities. That goes hand in hand with our ability to influence the community to allow this youth to rehabilitate and go on and live a better and fruitful life. Next.

Terrence Sheppard:

Determination of gang affiliation is made by me, based on the youth intake interviews or other intelligence. Sometimes I use intelligence from our local agencies. Sometimes I use them from federal agencies, depending on the level of this youth's criminality in the neighborhood.

Terrence Sheppard:

The youth signs an assent form, which basically says that they want to volunteer to participate in the WE RISE project. The WE RISE project is not something that a kid has to participate in, although they do have to participate in probation, but this program is voluntary. The parent signs a consent form saying that they're going to participate. Without the parents' participation, it is very difficult to get the youth to rehabilitate.

Terrence Sheppard:

Supervision assignment, basically all the youths are assigned to me in a caseload format. Some jurisdictions use a community-based organization referral process, but in Alameda County Probation, we developed a caseload specifically for this group.

Terrence Sheppard:

We developed a supervision plan. I sit down with the family. We develop this plan together, and so therefore everyone's involved in it. It could be the grandmother. It could be the little brother. It could be the entire family helping develop this supervision plan, so that the kid could be more successful.

Terrence Sheppard:

Supervising youth to ensure they adhere to the terms and conditions of probation, it depends. That supervision level depends on the kid's maturity level, ability to function in the community properly, and how much liberties are taken with the programs that they're referred to.

Terrence Sheppard:

Engage in pro-social activity with youth and their families. Oftentimes we have family engagement activities, and it'll be talked about later in this presentation.

Terrence Sheppard:

Provide gift cards to youth and their families. As we all know, gas is very expensive. Food is very expensive. Clothing is very expensive. Through this program, I'm able to furnish the youth and their family with food, clothing, toiletries. Just about a week ago, I bought three beds for three different youths, because they were sleeping on a mattress on the floor.

Terrence Sheppard:

Deliver cognitive behavioral therapy programming through Carey Guides. We use Carey Guides, and you can Google that. Those guides allow us to assist the youth in understanding their behavior. It also provides an opportunity for the DPO to have a deeper conversation with the youth, when the youth possibly don't understand why they're doing what they're doing. Next slide.

Terrence Sheppard:

Organize and facilitate family engagement activities. Those activities vary. Just this weekend, we had a family engagement activity at some stables in the Oakland Hills, where our youth were able to participate in the program where they were around therapeutic horses. That was something that the life coach, Juan Campos, developed. That was a lead that he developed. One thing about this program is that my agency allows us to be flexible enough to develop leads on different activities for our youth, as opposed to those that are already implemented by the Probation Department. Next.

Terrence Sheppard:

Duties of the life coach, they help develop the life map that outlines their personal goals and steps needed to achieve them in twelve to six months. That's a very critical stage, because I think that the life coach and me, we actually share a lot of the same responsibilities in terms of trying to help these youth meet their life goals, but I'm law enforcement. The youth, they have a different relationship with me than they do with the life coach.

Terrence Sheppard:

Support the youth in achieving their life map goals, however necessary. The life coach really, really works hands-on with each youth to help them achieve those goals.

Terrence Sheppard:

Provide the youth with a stipend totaling up to \$800 for completion of life goals. Now, that's a great incentive, because a lot of the youth, they live in impoverished situations. Having that as an incentive definitely helps with their desire to participate.

Terrence Sheppard:

Facilitate multidisciplinary team meetings for youth to arrange community-based services and supports. We've done that quite a few times in the local schools, where we have multidisciplinary team meetings so we can assist each youth with making sure that they're in the right classes, making sure that the principal knows who they are, making sure that the kid knows that they're supported throughout the school. Next.

Terrence Sheppard:

Operate work programs that provide programs for youth and paid internship opportunities. Basically, what we do is, as

opposed to sending our kids to other agencies for employment programs, we actually design them ourselves, so that the youth that we have on our program, they can actually learn to co-mingle in positive groups. These are different gangs. These aren't all the same gangs, so they're able to see that each other is human and that they have a lot in common. Next.

Terrence Sheppard:

Administer assessments to evaluate the needs and the outcomes. I administer assessments, Mr. Campos, the life coach, administers assessments. In that way, we're able to talk to each other about where our kids are in the program and where they need to be. Next.

Terrence Sheppard:

Joint duties of the DPO and life coach, conduct pre-release case planning. Before the youth is released from Juvenile Hall, the DPO and life coach start making referrals to service programs and working with the youth's family to address pressing needs. Yeah, we do that at the pre-release stage, where they're still in the Hall or they're active to GPS, which is considered home confinement. We start this process so that we can go ahead and start developing that relationship, which if you're in this business long enough, you'll know that the relationship is one of the most germane things to actually getting a kid to be successful.

Terrence Sheppard:

We set up welcome circles at the school. When they're released back into the community, not only do we set up the welcome circles, but we also ask the kid where they feel most comfortable attending school. By doing that, we get more buy-in from the kid wanting to attend school.

Terrence Sheppard:

I work in a place called our Transition Center where all these services are provided, school, mental health, and things of that nature, so I'm able to do that from my seat. I'm able to go into a different part of our office and talk to a person from Oakland Unified School District to actually enroll that kid, so it's not a long process. I don't have to talk to several different people. That person is here on site.

Terrence Sheppard:

Ongoing case management, DPO and life coach meet regularly with youth and their families to support their goals and address their pressing needs. Yeah, we definitely work together. Oftentimes we ride together. I'll pick him up or he'll pick me up and we'll conduct home visits and school visits together, just so the families and the youth know that we're supportive and we're working together. Next.

Terrence Sheppard:

Program participation, we have up to 15 youth on our caseload. We wanted to keep the numbers low, because with higher numbers, then there's less access. There's less contact. We wanted to keep the numbers low so it could be a very intimate program. We know the kid; we know the families. We know all of the outside resources that they've already had access to, and therefore we can provide them with the best service. Next.

Terrence Sheppard:

Successful program completion. Completing the terms and conditions are very normal. That's what most of our kids do in our program since we've established it, without any convictions and the life map goals. The most thing, the thing that we find success in, isn't necessarily completing probation. It's the thinking that they have after they've completed probation. Because a lot of kids can fake it 'til they make it. However, when our kid's complete probation, they're in a mental state where they can be successful and move forward in life, as opposed to, "I completed probation and that's it." Next.

Terrence Sheppard:

Program outcomes. We assess the following outcomes for each participant: Completion of probation, school attendance and performance, technical violations of probation, recidivism, strength of relationships with family and positive groups, and strength of relationships with groups or gang affiliates. We do that, and we'll explain that in the next slide. Next.

Terrence Sheppard:

We use an assessment tool called a SET (Social Embeddedness Tool), which is a modified version of a tool that's used out of LA. It basically tracks not only gang affiliation, but how much does a kid want to participate in gang activities at certain levels and certain times of this program. I think that's very important, because without tracking that, we don't really know where the kid is with their gang activity. We can surmise that they're doing better because of their conditions of probation being completed. However, this assessment allows us to really pinpoint where they are with their gang activity and how much time they're spending, and their connection to those gangs. Next.

Terrence Sheppard:

Basically, there are baselines. Zero to three months in the program, we try to ... but it's closer to three months, because

we don't really know the kid until about three months. The midpoint is nine months following program enrollment. Endpoint, program completion, typically 12 months to 18 months. We do a follow-up to see whether or not the strategies that we used actually were effective after the program. Next.

Terrence Sheppard:

Right now, as we speak, we're working with the Bright Research Group to actually assess our program to document and validate the theory of change, to provide descriptive data, to generate data and insight about value of the program to participants and their families and generate insight and learning necessary for the program's improvement and scalability. I think that's very important, because this person that's part of the Bright Research Group, I took her to each individual home and introduced her to each individual family, so then I could give her a warm handoff, so that the families didn't feel like they were being called by a stranger. We're in the process of having this whole process completed. Next.

Terrence Sheppard:

Thank you very much for having me. I greatly appreciate it. If you have any questions, please email me at tsheppar@acgov.org. Greatly appreciate it. Have a great day.

Cassy Blakely:

Thank you, Deputy Sheppard. You finished in record time, so we have a little bit of time for a couple of questions. Monica has been supporting you in the chat box and has answered a couple for you already, but there's still a couple more I want to bring to you. I invite others to put their questions in the chat.

Monica:

I figured I would stop, once we got to the end of the presentation.

Cassy Blakely:

Thank you so much, Monica, and Monica supports Deputy Sheppard, working with the County there in Alameda County. Mr. Sheppard, if you could share a little bit about the mental health services that are included in the supports that you and Juan provide, and then about any peer support success stories.

Terrence Sheppard:

Okay. We work with agencies, local agencies, which provide a lot of our mental health support. That's pretty much referred out, because we're not mental health professionals. We work very closely with those mental health professionals without divulging too much information and infringing on youth's rights, to make sure that whatever those needs are, that they're met on the mental health side, because oftentimes our kids have mental health issues that go way back to elementary school. We want to make sure that we have them involved in mental health services.

Terrence Sheppard:

In terms of a success, well, I have so many, but I'll tell you this one. We had a kid on the program, and Cassy's very aware of who this kid is. This kid called me one day and said, "Hey, Mr. Sheppard, do you have any gas cards? Because I need a gas card." I'm thinking that he's talking about his mother bringing him up here, so that she can have the gas card. He comes to my office, I give him the gas card, and I walk outside with him. He said, "I want to show you something." This kid showed me that he had bought his own car. This kid graduated summa cum laude from his school, and when he did his graduation speech, the first people that he congratulated and thanked were me and Mr. Campos.

Cassy Blakely:

Thank you so much, Mr. Sheppard. It's so exciting to hear that that's the outcome from that individual. I know exactly who you're talking about. Let me throw a couple more at you. How do you determine who is accepted into WE RISE?

Terrence Sheppard:

Well, it's a combination of things. First of all, with this group, we found that youth that had more than four referrals didn't do well in this group. That was through our first probably four or five kids, so then we started to focus on those kids that had one to three referrals. Age didn't matter, because we thought that kids of all ages deserved to be in this program.

PART 1 OF 4 ENDS [00:23:04]

Terrence Sheppard:

Kids of all ages deserve to be in this program if they're just as involved. And so, through that, in our connections in the neighborhood, I'm able to inquire about this kid on a level that our system doesn't capture. Because our system captures whether they're gang involved or not, but I'm able to go into talk to other agencies and the community that I have great relationships with, about this youth. And then, once I get all of that information and discuss with Mr. Campos, then we'll make a decision on whether or not that kid is suitable. But we also talk to the parent. We also pitch the program to the kid. And what we don't do is when we pitch the program, we don't have them sign up for it then. We give them 48 hours to think about it, to see whether or not they want to participate in the program. So then, it'll be on their own volition that

they participate in the program, as opposed to us pressuring them into participating in the program.

Cassy Blakely:

Wonderful. Thank you so much. I'm going to keep coming at you because we've got time in our schedule here. How do you do the incentives, that \$800 per program completion?

Terrence Sheppard:

Okay. That's built in, on the side for Mr. Campos. So basically, those incentives are designed around completing paperwork, such as certain documentation that he needs each of those kids to complete, completing certain assessments that he need those kids to complete and their participation in our work programs and things of that nature. I could actually, for anyone that want that information, please email me. I could provide a detailed rundown of all of that information and how it all works and how it's designed.

Monica Uriarte:

Terrence, I would also add to that if I can. We applied through OJJDP's Second Chance Act program for the incentive costs through a sub-award with our partners at the city of Oakland who have sponsored life coaching services in our community for decades. And they are the ones that contract and make it possible to get those incentives out to youth very quickly and in a very organized fashion.

Cassy Blakely:

Thank you, Monica. I have a fun one for you, Mr. Sheppard. What do you enjoy most about the work, which I'm sure is challenging?

Terrence Sheppard:

The thing that I enjoy most about the work is that I can prevent youth from creating more victims. How about that? In the community, these youth have victimized, quite a few people leading up to their involvement in the juvenile justice system here in Alameda County. By me establishing with them, the ground rules on how to live, how to move forward, how to take their situation and turn it into a winner and be successful, me knowing that there probably aren't going to be more victims created by this person, I think that's the main thing. Because I live in the community and it's very difficult to see folks be victimized by kids who are starving. But when you can get this kid to see, "Hey, you know what? I may not be able to give you fish, but I could teach you how to fish." It changes their outlook on life. I think that's the thing that I like the most about it.

Cassy Blakely:

Thank you, Terrence. I have one more question for you before we move on to our friends in North Carolina. Eastern terrorist organizations have been trolling for new recruits aiming at young people through gangs. Have you seen any signs of this in your program or the clients you serve?

Terrence Sheppard:

I have not seen that in any of the clients that I serve. The clients that I serve that will probably not be something that they will be interested in at all. I haven't heard anything from them, and I haven't heard anything about that in Oakland.

Cassy Blakely:

Thank you so much, Mr. Sheppard. Please continue to drop questions in the chat box. Mr. Sheppard is great about answering them along the way and we'll have another space for questions at the end. I do want to thank the folks at Alameda County for their amazing and impactful work and for taking the time to share that with us.

Cassy Blakely:

We're going to jump clear to the other side of the country, to hear from our friends at the R2R program in North Carolina. So, Ms. Debbie Dawes and Ms. Christal Carmichael, the floor is yours.

Christal Carmichael:

Thank you so much, Cassie. Thank you for having me today. I am going to share with you a little bit about our program. Re-Entry To Resilience in North Carolina. We can go to the next slide. To give you an overview of where we bridge the gap where reentry is concerned, in North Carolina, the juvenile justice system reduced the number of youth development center commitments from 879 in the year 2000, to 148 in the year 2019. And so, we are on a mission to try to continue to lower that number, to ensure that our youth are getting a fair chance at being successful within their communities without having to be committed. But when they are committed, we're definitely there to fill in the gap and make sure that they can return back successfully.

Christal Carmichael:

So, reentry for youth and youth YDCs is a complex, highly individualized process that requires the seamless and coordinated engagement of youth, parents and multiple systems, including juvenile justice courts, behavioral health, and school. That's exactly what our program does. Next slide please.

Christal Carmichael:

Our value statement is to successfully transition our young people from the youth development centers back into the community. We try to do that as seamlessly as possible because we know there are so many dynamics involved in that and we'll get into those throughout the next slides.

Christal Carmichael:

Our program goals are to successfully reintegrate our young people into family and community systems of care to ensure that they have educational progress and advancement and to help them master life skills such as critical problem solving and self-control. We find that these are the most common factors in helping our young people transition successfully. Next slide please.

Christal Carmichael:

An overview of what we've done so far. We have four youth development centers across the state of North Carolina. Right now, we've served over 190 young people, and we are also serving in eight counties. We originally started with four. Then we received the OJJDP grant to expand into two additional counties. In doing that, we found that those, there were two additional counties surrounding one of the counties that could use our help without having to increase the amount of funding. So, we're right now in eight counties across the state.

Christal Carmichael:

Another part of the research that is extremely important when we're looking at reentry, our program costs around \$3,000 to \$5,000 per youth per year. But, if you look at the amount of money it costs to house our young people in detention centers and youth development centers, it costs around \$109,000 per year. That's a huge cost savings. If we can continue to reduce that recidivism rate will pay off by leaps and bounds over the next decade. So far, we have seen wonderful outcomes in our program. We have 96% of youth who've graduated from R2R and had no further involvement with the criminal justice system. I will say this was very early on in the program when we did this research and that was 2019. So, we had two years of implementation of the program and then as we all know, after that, we were hit with COVID. We're looking forward to the next set of research and Debbie will get into that, towards the end of the slideshow. Next slide, please.

Christal Carmichael:

These are some of the comments that our stakeholders had to say about our program. I'll just give you a little snapshot because again, Debbie's going to get into what the evaluation was for our program and a lot of the outcome data that came from that. But most of what we're hearing across the board in terms of working with partners and stakeholders and what they feel about the program. One person said, we were very instrumental in assisting youth alongside with the court counselor. It was a partnership helping them find jobs, definitely getting them back into school settings, really involved with the community college. Not saying that the court counselor can't play that role as well, but like Mr. Sheppard said, the court counselor, the court services workers have a totally different relationship than the coaches do. And so, that's what we're seeing.

Christal Carmichael:

This is what one of the participants said in the survey. "It was good to have an additional partner to assist with connecting the youth to additional resources. I think it is really important to understand the different dynamics in those different types of relationships, because the youth will begin to show different levels of success, depending on who they're working with." Another participant said, "We could use more success coaches to serve more of our children, serve more of our families. The rapport, the relationship with the youth, everything I heard was extremely positive. They were great at getting community services." Another participant said, "I've been very impressed with the commitment levels of working with communities and schools, Re-Entry to Resilience and also the connections they're able to make with school and other services. I think it really helps out in the transition, especially with supporting the court counselor who helps a lot in the training process as well." That's just a real short summary of what some of the participants of the focus group said from our evaluation survey. Next slide, please.

Christal Carmichael:

This is what we use as our pillars of success. The top two areas that we focus on when we get youth involved in the program's educational placement, we try to make sure that the young people are involved within a week after they're released from the youth development center into some sort of academic program. We also want to focus on vocational services and/or job career placement. And then, the other pillars, which are very important, but they're things that we're working on throughout the process and they're not one of those top priorities when they're released. But they are family engagement to sustain continuum of care, community engagement, to model the behavioral change, adopt ownership within the community and give back to the community. And then, continuation of therapeutic services to ensure pro social development. And so, with that, we also incorporate those mental health services, maybe even substance abuse services, whatever the needs of the youth are, we try to make sure that we continue those services throughout the time

they're in our program. Next slide, please.

Christal Carmichael:

Here is an overview, a visualization of what our program looks like. We have three phases within the program. That first phase is the intake and enrollment phase. That's when we meet with the family, we get all of the information from them. Usually this happens with a court counselor to ensure that it's a warm handoff. And then, we go into phase two, which starts when they are actually in the youth development center. Our youth success coaches are attending the service planning meetings each month. We have what's called a transition intervention plan that we incorporate the family to establish their goals for the next 12 months or however long they are committed in the YDC. And then, we start that process of planning.

Christal Carmichael:

We look at the academic progress that we want to see them make. Sometimes that may be a GED. Sometimes it may be community college. Sometimes it may be even a four-year college. But we do incorporate the family and the young person to ensure that whatever their goals are, that's what we like to focus on.

Christal Carmichael:

And then, the third phase of our program starts the day that they are released from the youth development center. And that's when we begin to actually implement everything that we've planned within that transition intervention plan, throughout the time they were committed in the YDC. Next slide please.

Christal Carmichael:

This goes a little bit deeper into what I just explained. The intake and enrollment phase are from day 1 of placement to day 60. And that's when we are meeting with the family, we're building rapport, we're making sure that the family has everything they need about the program. So, they have a good understanding of what the expectations are. Next slide.

Christal Carmichael:

These are some of the critical activities. We identify the youth to be served. We do all the intake and orientation paperwork. We create the case file, which means all of the DPS paperwork that's required for them to even be committed to the YDC. We review that, go over it, make sure that we have everything we need to start the planning process. And then, we build rapport with the youth and family to ensure there's engagement. Next slide.

Christal Carmichael:

Second phase pre-release. That's within three months prior to their release from the YDC. Before that though, we've been going to all the service planning meetings. So, we're updated on all of the things that have been going on. We've been advocating for the youth throughout those meetings. And then, we start that transition. We continue that transition intervention plan for the next phase. Next slide please.

Christal Carmichael:

Some of the critical activities that we're doing here is the transition intervention plan. We intensify efforts towards the end of their stay at the YDC to make sure that the home, family, and community are prepared to receive the young person and then that the youth has completed within the YDC. That could be quite a bit actually, because we do see a lot of progress being made within the YDCs and particularly to have the opportunity to demonstrate that progress within their service planning meetings. So, we put a portfolio together to ensure that when we go out to the schools or academic facilities, to ensure that we are advocating for them to be re-enrolled, we take that portfolio information with us and advocate for the young person. So, we don't run into any issues when we're trying to get that young person back re-enrolled into the academic institutions. Next slide, please.

Christal Carmichael:

And then, phase three, again, it starts the day that the young person is released from the YDC. That does not end our services. We do follow the young person for 12 months after they are released. So, we are making sure that everything's implemented correctly. We are making sure that those services, that the young person is involved in. The mental health services, substance abuse, vocational rehab, whatever the case may be. We make sure that it's a good fit, and we make sure that it continues throughout the duration of service, as the young person and family needs them. Next slide, please.

Christal Carmichael:

So, these critical activities during this phase, we're executing the transition intervention plan, preparing the community support system for our exit. And then, we support you the family through effective case management. Next slide please.

Christal Carmichael:

I will transition this over to Debbie Dawes, who's our wonderful partner with RTI. But before I do that, I do want to acknowledge all the information that you just heard. We are a team of seven. We have a wonderful assistant director. And then, we have five amazing youth success coaches that are just wonderful with implementing all the information I just presented. So, I will turn it over to you, Debbie.

Debbie Dawes:

Thank you, Christal. I will attest to the amazing team that Christal has, here in North Carolina. Good morning, good afternoon, everyone. My name is Debbie Dawes and I lead a team of four researchers at RTI who are conducting a study of R2R. For those of you who aren't familiar with RTI, we are a nonprofit research Institute. We work with government agencies and private foundations to provide training and technical assistance and research and evaluation services. Next slide please.

Debbie Dawes:

I thought I would begin with a little history about how OJJDP Second Chance Act funding has supported collaboration for a number of years between North Carolina Department of Public Safety, communities, and schools of North Carolina and RTI to improve youth reentry. Back in 2015, the Department of Public Safety was awarded a Second Chance Act, juvenile reentry reform grant to implement a package of system changes, which included strategies to improve case planning, needs to service matching, parent engagement and education and workforce development support.

Debbie Dawes:

At that time, RTI was the department's research partner, and we tracked their progress toward implementing the package of reforms. We also conducted a youth reentry study. One of the key learnings from this study was that enrollment in school, after discharge from a long-term facility, is a huge barrier for youth and their parents. We heard almost uniformly from juvenile justice staff, just how difficult and long the enrollment process was, sometimes resulting in really long gaps between facility discharge and school enrollment. If the student wanted to go back to traditional school, they often face pushback from some school districts that have a blanket policy admitting students to alternative schools after their stay in a juvenile facility, no matter how much progress they had made during their stay or what the best learning environment for them might be.

Debbie Dawes:

And since, we know from research that youth who are connected to school and pro social activities are much less likely to continue in the juvenile or adult system, it was imperative to the department to address this barrier in order to see more positive outcomes for reentry youth, both in terms of education and recidivism. Next slide please.

Debbie Dawes:

When the department had the opportunity to apply for continuation funding from OJJDP in 2016, it submitted a proposal and was awarded funding to implement the R2R pilot program in partnership with Communities in Schools (CIS) of North Carolina to address this very specific education barrier. CIS was an appealing partner due to its longstanding and strong ties to schools. It has a great reputation for successfully supporting youth at-risk of dropout. At the end of the grant in late 2019, as Christal mentioned, we saw that the performance measures, showed very early evidence of successful implementation and positive impact on youth outcomes. And then, that takes us to the 2019 Second Chance Act grant when the department applied for and was awarded more funding to expand the R2R pilot to four new counties and then contract with RTI to conduct a comprehensive study of the R2R pilot.

Debbie Dawes:

Next slide please. In appreciation of R2R's pilot status, we are framing the program evaluation to elevate the focus on continuous learning through our evaluation activities, all to support ongoing improvements in program policies and practices, and also to build capacity within R2R to continue monitoring and assessment practices after the life of the grant. In this context of learning, we are aiming to understand the major components of the R2R model, how R2R implementation stacks up to the program model through a fidelity assessment. And what adaptations are made along the way for example, to better serve older transition age youth who may not be returning to school. And we also want to understand staff training requirements, their experiences, and their needs, as well as the context R2R is implemented in. Both in the facility stage and at the community stage. And of course, you want to understand plans for sustainability and expansion. Next slide.

Debbie Dawes:

To do this, we've got a data collection and analysis strategy in place. We're conducting focus groups and interviews with programs' stakeholders, and participants to learn about their experiences with R2R, understand their perceptions of the value of the program and of course, impact of the program. We're obtaining program data to assess implementation quality. For the outcome study, we're using administrative data to assess recidivism outcomes of R2R participants and a comparison group of reentry use. And of course, we're using administrative data and R2R program data for reporting performance measures to OJJDP. Last slide, please.

Debbie Dawes:

Our last piece of our study really is to provide ongoing feedback to R2R in the department. And again, the focus of our

study is to share what we're learning and is near real time as possible. So, R2R and the department can consider and respond on to what we're learning, in a timelier way, rather than waiting to the end of the grant when we deliver our final report. For example, we're planning routine fidelity reporting with Christal's team and to produce briefs from our focus groups and our interviews with stakeholders. We're sharing what their views are on program implementation and any recommendations for improvement they might have. The one last thing that I will say, I will make a plug, is that Second Chance Act funding through OJJDP has really been a wonderful opportunity to build collaboration between, in our case, a state agency, a community-based organization and the research community to support youth reentry. So, I highly plug looking into the current solicitation that's open for funding. Thank you.

Cassy Blakely:

Thank you so much, Debbie and Christal. We have some time for questions, and I've got a couple for you. The first one is, how is a release date determined from a YDC in North Carolina? Does there need to be demonstrated improvement? Is it a more subjective judicial decision? Or something else?

Christal Carmichael:

Yeah. Thank you for that question. And it really does depend on a lot of things, sometimes the severity of the charge. It sometimes depends on the age of the youth so we can't really say that everyone has a specific date. Some people do when they go in, but that really depends on like the charge, the age and so many different factors. So, every case is different.

Cassy Blakely:

Thank you, Christal. Debbie, this one is more towards for you. Is the RTI assessment of the program available for download?

Debbie Dawes:

Not yet. We're in the middle of it right now. So, it will be available eventually, but we are about a year behind because of COVID. So, Christal's expansion program really just got off the ground in July 2021, about 10 months ago. So, we are sort of right in the thick of data collection for this evaluation.

Cassy Blakely:

Thank you so much. And Christal, these are going to come back at you. I'm sure you can see them popping in the chat here too. What have been some of your major obstacles with getting youth back into their neighborhood school? And how have you dealt with schools pushing parents to send youth to alternative schools?

Christal Carmichael:

Yeah, we do run into that quite a bit, especially when we first started in 2017, because we were still establishing our credibility as a program. However, we've kind of got into the groove of, first of all, listening to what the parents and the youth want because a lot of times you can put them back into a school just because they don't understand or have the knowledge of what is going to work best for that young person at that time. So, I think the first thing is equipping them with the education, the knowledge, and the tools to ensure they understand, well, these are the issues that we saw prior to your young person being committed. And this is what we don't want to run into again. And these are their strengths. So, what can we do to capitalize on these strengths? And then we present to them the opportunities that are available outside of the traditional model of school, and then we let them decide.

Christal Carmichael:

So then when they do decide, there still may be some areas of resistance from that academic institution. And that's when we start the whole advocacy process for the young person in their family. The main thing though, is in helping them with the confidence they need to present themselves. That's the first thing. And a lot of that comes from just having the knowledge, the education, to go meet with the individuals they need to meet with themselves. And a lot of times we accompany them to those.

Christal Carmichael:

But then the other thing is making sure that the staff at that academic institution understand that first of all, everybody deserves a second chance, and these are the areas of progress that we've seen since that young person has been out of the institution and this is what you can expect when they return. We also support the staff at the academic institution saying, hey, you're not doing this by yourself. You have a whole team of this program to support you. And we can put a plan into place if this young person starts to demonstrate these types of behaviors that are similar to what they were demonstrating before. This is what we have in place to ensure that they can rely on a team of people to contact, to support, to guide them through what that young person needs to be successful. So many pieces to that question, but we do run into resistance, yet we do have a plan to counteract that.

Cassy Blakely:

Wonderful. And there is a question in there about credit recovery. So, Christal, I'll ask you to answer that in the chat

when we move into Reg and DeAnn's space, because I want to ask this question about staff connecting pre-release, because that pre-release part is so important. What methods are in place for your staff to connect with young people while they are still in YDC and any barriers in making contact with youth pre-release?

Christal Carmichael:

Okay, so what methods are in place for us to contact the youth while they are there?

Cassy Blakely:

How are you doing pre-release work?

Christal Carmichael:

Yeah. So, we're already, once we have that initial contact, we are at minimum in touch with them once every month. So especially during those service planning meetings, we're there to make sure that the young person has an advocate. And a lot of times, the court counselor is there, and everybody on the team from the YDC is there, but we bring a different perspective because we're planning for their release while the other part of the team is kind of planning for what they're going to do while they're there. So, we don't really have any issues with contacting. That's part of our program. It's part of the requirement for our program is to be in the YDCs while they're committed. And so, our communication with them is pretty consistent throughout their commitment.

Cassy Blakely:

Wonderful. And Christal... Oh, go ahead, Debbie.

Debbie Dawes:

I was just going to jump in and say another aspect too is Christal's team is regularly engaging with parents as well during that YDC stay, which I think is a real critical point and unique to Christal's model is really shoring up parents and making sure parents have an advocate too, and they've got a voice and understand the process. And that's definitely going on during the YDC phase as well as the community phase.

Christal Carmichael:

Yeah, that's true.

Cassy Blakely:

Thank you so much. I see a few more questions for you, but I'm going to hold those until our question session at the end unless you want to answer them in the chat while our next presenters are presenting, but I do want to turn it over to Utah's Department of Juvenile Justice, where Ms. Deann Mason and Mr. Reg Garff will share about the program that they started in 2017.

Reg Garff:

Fantastic. Everybody needs a stretch, right? Oh, I've been sitting here for a minute. All right, thanks so much. We've heard some really neat presentations today, and I've just been going through and making a few notes and some nice commonalities that you see between all these successful programs. And it's really neat to hear all the work that's being done across the country. So far, we covered the West Coast. We covered the East Coast. Now we're going to hit intermountain West here in Utah.

Reg Garff:

And I just want to talk briefly, first of all, I have 25 years in juvenile justice, and in criminal justice almost 30. I should be tapping out, but that's not going to happen anytime soon. And so, I am here for the duration. And Deanne has been awesome in implementation. She and I have worked closely on implementing Utah's Second Chance Grant in Utah, and I'll let her introduce herself here shortly.

Reg Garff:

My official title is program director for special projects and operational policy is what we're going to call that today. And as we go through today, there's one thing I want to note that's a little bit different in our state, and that is that all pre-adjudicated and post-adjudicated cases in Utah and juvenile justice are managed at the statewide level. We don't have local juvenile authorities. Everything is managed at the statewide level, our juvenile court are statewide, our juvenile probation, which is part of the courts, is managed statewide, and then juvenile justice services, post-adjudication is managed in a statewide basis as well.

Reg Garff:

And so, as we talk about implementing our Second Chance Grant in Utah, it was a statewide effort. So, it takes about four and a half hours, five hours to drive across the state of Utah. And we have a lot of case managers and case workers doing a lot of the same kind of work that you just heard about.

Reg Garff:

There's a lot of early service planning going on. There's a lot of family inclusion, child and family team meetings where we integrate the youth voice, and the youth actually manages those meetings to help us better understand what their

needs are. Pre-release planning, surveys, 90 days ahead of time. Again, very similar to some of the efforts we've heard about in North Carolina and out in California. And reason you hear that is because those are things that work. Those are things that matter.

Reg Garff:

The four areas that we really focused on in Utah was education, employment, housing, and mentoring. And you're going to hear a little bit of a mixed bag as far as success for us goes. And I want to talk through that a little bit and what that looks like.

Reg Garff:

And we had a couple other things, hiccups along the lines, and this happens in every program. Of course, we've heard COVID already, right? COVID had a big impact on the number of youths that were actually being managed in our system. And then also their access to employment and housing. All of that was difficult during that timeframe, as I'm sure everybody on this call has experienced.

Reg Garff:

We also went through a period of reform. Utah's Juvenile Justice System went through some changes that significantly reduced the number of kids in our juvenile detention, our short-term detention, and our long-term secure care programs. And that was a good thing. Keeping kids in their homes and in their neighborhoods and with their families and providing services in those settings was what we were really looking to do with that change.

Reg Garff:

However, that changed how we had to implement our grant and what youth we had available for us to enter into the grant. So, during our grant cycle, we experienced a lot of change, and we had to adapt to that as we went through. As you look at this slide here, this is just a simple process that we laid out for our case managers to access services for our grant. And simply put, they work closely with the youth and family. When they identify a need in one of those four categories, they would fill out an application and send that into our staff to make sure it met the terms and conditions of the grant. And that included everything from rent, to first and last month's rent, and tuition, books, any supplies that would be needed for school, so computers, which became a problem during COVID, trying to locate electronics.

Reg Garff:

And then also all those items had to go through an approval process for finance. And we've heard some interesting things. I really want to come back to Terrence and talk about how his gift card program, because our finance people don't like gift cards so much. And so, we have to find different ways of working within the systems that we have.

Reg Garff:

During the last 60 days of our residential care with the kids, we really pump up the services. And we heard about this in North Carolina as well, we start that wrap. And then also, especially those first 30 days afterwards, after release from one of our programs or facilities, we really try and inundate those youth with services at that point as well and make lots of contacts and provide lots of supports during that time. Because what we found in our research was that was the time when we had kids that would make mistakes. And so, if we can better support them during that time, they were less likely to do that.

Reg Garff:

And so that's just kind of the lay of the land in Utah as we began implementing our grant back in 2017. Changes in our legislation, changes in COVID.

Reg Garff:

Our next slide. We talked a little bit about our education. DeAnn, I'll turn time over to you.

DeAnn Mason:

Thanks, Reg. I will do just a brief introduction. My name is DeAnn Mason, and I am the grant manager. I work on the Second Chance Grant for this one that we're describing from 2017, as well as a new one that we have been awarded from 2020. Across our division, I am also the program coordinator for our peer support team, which is for our staff support. And then for a long duration of time, I was kind of tapped out as the COVID lady. I tracked our COVID across our division for our staff that had been exposed or positive. So that's a little introduction.

DeAnn Mason:

I'm going to go ahead and get into this. So, Reg did a great job at describing our education component on this grant. It was utilized for tuition, books, computers, and so forth. We found that this was a very strong stabilization for our youth in our centers. Some of them were even able to do online courses while they were in our custody. But as Reg mentioned, the COVID component really made it tricky when they were leaving our centers.

DeAnn Mason:

One thing I would like to note is where this was our 2017 grant, it has since closed, and we were able to sustain this

assistance for our youth. So as a division, we have actually picked up that assistance, and we are still covering tuition for the youth that are getting out of our centers or that need that added support. We're also still covering laptops, computers, books, anything along these lines. So' while we don't cover it anymore through the Second Chance Grant, we have sustained it that duration of time since we closed, which is awesome. Next slide.

DeAnn Mason:

The next piece in our Second Chance Grant from 2017 was housing. Like Reg mentioned, we do rent, deposits, furniture was another big one. We had a lot of youth. I know this was mentioned earlier in the conversation that they didn't have a bed. They had no desk. They were oftentimes sleeping in a living room or on the floor. If they were going into a new setting, apartment or whatnot, they didn't have any of those beginning basics. And so, we were able to use this portion of the grant to really help them focus on getting themselves where they needed to be and having those, what we might call luxuries or privileges... Included roommate agreements. So, when youth were leaving our custody, sometimes they were members, and they were able to say, rent a room to start establishing themselves and understanding what it was to pay those bills and those requirements to where they could save up and get themselves into an apartment.

DeAnn Mason:

Again, where this grant has been completed, I am also very eager and excited to state that our division has picked up this coverage as well for the youth that we work with. So, it's no longer covered through our particular Second Chance Grant, but we do still provide housing services for our youth as we recognized that it was very beneficial, and it was a major stabilization factor.

DeAnn Mason:

Go ahead. Last one is employment. I don't have the same success rates to describe during the grant. This was an area that we had major hiccups. We could not initially on our 2017 grant find employers that were willing to take on juveniles. There's that stigma that comes with youth being within the services.

DeAnn Mason:

There were major struggles in this area. We had tried going to job fairs. We had tried all sorts of areas, and we were just finding that we were running into a brick wall. Then when COVID hit, it only enhanced all of those struggles. We had people that they were shutting down and going online, virtual world. They didn't need the same staff capacity. And so, this was actually an area of our 2017 grant that we ended up dropping out of the grant to put our focus and our time and money into those other areas that were finding the success.

DeAnn Mason:

And what we did is as we put in a new request that I mentioned, that's another grant that I'm working on, and we were awarded a 2020 grant that focuses solely on employment. In doing so, we were able to put somebody in a position where that is their focus and time and delivery. And we are finding that it is thriving, and it is getting that enhancement for our youth. We are still finding that employers don't want to be paid through the grant, but they are much more on board in taking on those youth and giving them a chance, mentoring, and coaching them throughout that employment piece. And we have another individual that really, really heads that project and is doing a great job across all of our areas statewide to get the youth established with solid careers. Our hope is to get them with careers and not just a standard job that they can be proud of and get themselves stabilized with. Next.

Reg Garff:

All right. Thanks, DeAnn. Really interesting things with regards to our education. So, one of the things that we also found during COVID is it forced us to go online. We had to go to online school, and you know what turned out to be a blessing about that is our universities. We were able to bring higher education into our facilities. Kids who never thought that they would ever have a chance to go to college or that they could even complete college, started taking college classes online. And guess what? They discovered that they could do it.

Reg Garff:

And one of the neatest things we heard was from these kids was saying, I never thought I'd be able to go to college. I didn't think I was smart enough to do it. And once they started getting into it and started doing the online courses, they realized they could and that they had a means to help pay for that to help remove some of those barriers to being able to get into school. So, we're starting to actually educate kids and can take online classes from our local universities right there.

Reg Garff:

Secondly, we also do a lot of certification work, kids learning how to, and vocational work. So, kids who aren't interested in college, great. Hey, we've got welding programs. We've got an automotive program. We have a robotics program. We have a composites program. And then we also have feeders into the community.

Reg Garff:

Problem came during our initial grant. And as you look at the numbers here, you can see down here at the bottom, housing and assistance numbers crept up, went right up, and we were able to sustain and do a pretty good job there. But if you look just one up above, employment assistance, there's hardly any blocks on there. And part of it was what we went through, and what I really wanted to share was what didn't work for us, what did not work for us was going through volunteers. So having unpaid individuals and volunteers try to run an employment program, they lacked consistency. They lacked the ability to create ongoing relationships in the community. What really is making a difference is being able to actually hire somebody and have somebody employed in that position to maintain the consistency and the relationships necessary and the continuity with the kids for that matter. So, volunteers, it didn't work that way for that. And I love volunteers, and they can come in, and they can do a lot of great work with our kids, but to maintain an employment program, that just was not a good fit.

Reg Garff:

As Deann said, that was one of the things we found that didn't work. And we actually did a grant change and submitted a program at a grant change to OJJDP, dropping out the employability. And that was a strategy on our part simply because that allowed us then to reapply for another Second Chance Grant to really focus on that effort of employability.

Reg Garff:

And so, I really want people to understand that grants are a great thing to help us move forward and to try some new things out. And those things that don't work, we can figure out other means and mechanisms to do those. Evaluation is a critical component for what we're doing. So next slide, please.

Reg Garff:

As you look at this, one of the things that you really want to take a look at is, and especially here in our state and across the country, we know the disproportionality of youth of color in our systems is high. And so that is something that I always ask when we go back to do evaluations. Let's take a look at that. And as you can see from this, the black blocks represent the percentage of youth from these various ethnic groups in our system. And then the blue gray represents those percentage of youth that participated in the grant. As you can see, we were underrepresented with services to our black youth, overrepresented with Hispanic youth, overrepresented with our multiracial youth. So, one of the things we did was to try and address this on a monthly basis, look at these numbers, see where we're at, and then provide that feedback back to our case management staff. Next slide, please.

Reg Garff:

The other areas, Utah has a divergent, right? So, we have a lot of rural areas in our state. And then more than 80% of our state's population is located along about an 80-mile stretch called the Wasatch Front from Ogden to Provo. And that's where most of our population lies. As you can see, we are overrepresented in our urban areas, underrepresented in some of our rural areas.

Reg Garff:

Next slide please.

Reg Garff:

And then we also take a look at our risk level of youth. And if you look at this particular slide, you'll see that we have our high-risk youth. We're a little bit underrepresented in the grant. And part of this reasoning is that most of these really high-risk youth are in one of our secure care locations, and so some of these activities they were not able ... It's like, we're not paying for rent for a kid who's in one of our facilities. But when they come out, we are. And so, you'll see we're a little bit overrepresented in our moderate areas.

Reg Garff:

And the one point I wanted to get across was this. And that is that, look, the grant is a great time to try things out, see what works. And if it doesn't work, figure out what's going to make it work, and then work closely with your grant manager on how to make those adjustments. DeAnn?

Deann Mason:

I was just going to mention, one wonderful thing about this slide that it does show is it does go in alignment with our reform here in Utah. We really wanted to make sure that these services were being provided to the high-end moderate risk youth. Like Reg said, it does make sense where our high is on a lower percentage because they are typically in our longer care. But to see our moderate risk youth getting those forms of services really does align.

DeAnn Mason:

The other component here is that we have a voluntary service agreement where our youth are still able to access services when they've been terminated. And so, knowing that our moderate risk youth have had those windows or glasses of being assisted and watched and so forth, they could be exiting our programs, they could be terminated from our care and still come back and be supported. And that's across the board. I just like this slide because I really think it demonstrates

not only where the reform has been but where that geared attention goes based on that.

DeAnn Mason:

Lastly, with what Reg was sharing is just the demographics. This is showing our male youth versus our female youth. More of our female youth, which is a very small group that are in custody across the state of Utah, but they are actually being represented above what we have typically. Whereas our male youth, again, might be a little bit underrepresented. I will say if this kind of goes in with a last slide, as far as our high risk, we do have a higher volume of male youth that are in those longer care facilities than what we have demonstrated with our female youth. And so that could also be some of that representation in those percentages.

DeAnn Mason:

Last slide.

There's our contact information if anyone needs anything. And then, Cassie, I'm sure there might be some questions.

Cassy Blakely:

There certainly are, Miss DeAnn. So, we thank you for the work that you've done, and especially for the candidness on today's presentation. It's difficult to come in front of a national audience and say this is where we mis stepped, and this is where we had to come back and try something else. And I think that's something I've always appreciated in getting to work alongside your team is there's a way, we just have to find it.

Cassy Blakely:

That said, I've got a couple of employment-based questions for you. That seems to be the hot ticket with your presentation. So, first, the policy political environment in Utah and Arizona are similar. How were second chance employment opportunities determined? Was it driven by the business community? If not, how receptive were employers to the second chance talent?

Reg Garff:

Yeah, the climate is very similar. What we did is work with chambers of commerce. So, business driven. What are the hot, hot jobs? What are people looking to employ? Where are the needs? Is what we're doing now. This is not what we did with the previous grant. Previously, what didn't work ... Again, what did not work was just trying to just do things on our own with just a few contacts that we already had. Once again, having somebody fully employed in this endeavor, being able to go out and meet with businesses and establish relationships has really been the effort there.

Reg Garff:

So, what we're trying to do is going out, looking at the job market, talking to businesses, seeing what their needs are, and then provide whatever kind of certification or education might be necessary to prep kids for coming out and finding employment.

DeAnn Mason:

I just wanted to add on that, Reg mentioned we do a ton of certifications while they're in our care and also different forms of trade work. And so, they also really started to balance those factors and say, okay, if we're going to have somebody learning welding, perhaps we can get someone into our centers that is geared towards that. And so, we beef up their resumes as much as possible with these skill sets while they're in our care in hopes to have them be a marketable youth.

Cassy Blakely:

Thanks so much, DeAnn, Reg. I think that's important to share, too, right? It's a little bit of both of what they allude to, preparing youth in facility with the certifications and skills to meet the demands for the market in Utah, but then also working with employers to build those relationships locally has been so instrumental.

Reg Garff:

Right.

Cassy Blakely:

Wonderful. I have another employment one for you, Reg, so be ready. Second chance employment remains an issue around the nation. There seems to be an uptick of formerly incarcerated returning citizens becoming entrepreneurs out of necessity. Is there an appetite to build out an entrepreneurial pathway with your program?

Reg Garff:

No. That's the short answer. Frankly, it's because we don't need it, and that is because there is such a demand right now for employees. I don't know what you guys all are experiencing. We have a hard time hiring people even just to come work for us, for the state, and there's a lack of employees available in the private sector as well. And so, we initially offered to pay the hourly wage for these youth that were going out to these employers, and the employers are like, "Nah, we don't, we don't want to deal with that. We're just happy to have somebody in the position," and the feedback that

we've received because of the prep work that we've done with the kids is that the kids going out and working with them, they're doing better than their general recruits. They're sticking around longer. They have better capacity to learn and stay with the employers, and employers are just super happy to have them there.

Reg Garff:

And, like I said, these are jobs that are careers. We're talking fiber optics. Some of our major construction companies across the state. And also, one of the successes that helps add to that success is the mentoring component. We partnered and contracted with YAP, and so we have that employability support in those sectors. As well as kids go out for jobs, they have that employment support through YAP. And so, employers are super happy with our kids. They're anxious to get them in their businesses.

Cassy Blakely:

Yeah. And I think, Reg, part of that speaks to the pre- and post-release services, right?

Reg Garff:

Yes.

Cassy Blakely:

So, if we look for connections across all three programs that shared today is that relationship and preparation started before youth return to their communities. Right? So, making sure that their skills were there, and their hope and goals were aligned with the program that they were getting involved in, so that they're ready to take advantage of the opportunities that are in front of them, and supported to do so.

Cassy Blakely:

I've got another question for you there in Utah, and then I'll open it up for our last 10 minutes for folks to ask questions of any of our panelists. And I'll jump back to the questions we missed for our North Carolina folks.

Cassy Blakely:

So, first, Reg and DeAnn, a question here for you. I noticed there is a behavioral health aspect to your evaluation and a general lack of services. What services were you offering, and what were the barriers to providing these?

DeAnn Mason:

So, one of the services we thought was going to take a large quantity of that specific area was we were going to pair up and do ... It was like a peer support program for our youth, and it was meant to be assisting and training the individuals to get there, rolling out this curriculum, really putting in some coaching and mentoring for our youth. The hiccup we ran into, or the barrier was when we talked about getting that paid for, it was enhancing the skillset of these individuals, these adults, the staff, and they wouldn't stay put. They then used that growth to move forward, so we couldn't ever get our feet underneath us.

DeAnn Mason:

The other piece was we were hoping that some of that would help go towards the way we would define behavioral health as being maybe mental health services, medication management, things along those lines. And as we were rolling out the grant, that was not what it was covering. It was actually more of the coaching and the mentoring component. So, you can see in that evaluation graph, we did utilize it a little bit, but between those different barriers and those different setbacks, it was not being promoted the way that we were hoping for our youth, and we had other means that we were able to support them in those areas just as a division as opposed to the second chance grant.

Reg Garff:

Yeah. In short, with the behavior services, we had been contracting for some of those services as well to come in. When COVID hit, that put a little bit of a hiccup and roadblock on that. Again, what we did is we looked to some of our internal resources, and we have elevated our behavioral health department within our division here and implemented DVT across the division as well. Everybody's getting trained. And we're putting that together with our dialectical behavioral therapy as a common language across the division, across all the programs.

Reg Garff:

And so, yeah, where the grant didn't really work out the way we wanted it to, it did inform a process or way we could develop stuff internally on our own that seems to be working better as well. So, again, grant opportunity, learn something from it and parlay that into something that actually is going to work a little bit better for you. If it's not working in the grant, we can change those. So, take a look at that and learn from those opportunities that the grants provide.

Cassy Blakely:

Thank you so much, Reg. Such a great point, too, with these OJJDP opportunities really shaped as demonstration projects. And, Julia, please feel free to jump in here. It's a chance to say we think this is what's going to work, but we know once we get on the ground and we start working with real people in real communities, the best laid plans aren't

always the best laid plans, right? And so, we have to make adaptations. And as a funder, OJJDP has been very flexible to a number of grantees and being able to make shifts. So, appreciate that.

Cassy Blakely:

I'm going to open, in our last eight minutes or so, questions for the full panelists. And before we go back to the questions that we had for North Carolina that we didn't get to, I've got one in the chat from Arkansas, they've implemented career and vocational coaches. What we do is help the youth come out of DYS, get enrolled in school, get jobs, get driver's license and other transitional services. We meet once a month with coaches all over the state to see what is working. Do you think this is something other states might be needing?

Cassy Blakely:

So that's a question to everybody, and, Julia, feel free to jump in since you've got your fingers in work across the country as well. Is that type of program something folks think is needed in other states?

Cassy Blakely:

No one's brave enough to say yes first. I'm going to say, I think, yes, Jasmine, from what we've seen in our work as a TTA center with folks across the country, it is absolutely something that folks need. Connecting to jobs, connecting to school provides a foundation to deal with a lot of the basic needs that get in the way of youth having that successful reentry into their communities.

Julia Alanen:

Sorry. I was just going to add to what you said, Cassie, that these education and vocational needs are expanding some of our other funding streams, right? We have also a need for educational advocacy for folks who are trying to get access to education and services and can't or being discriminated against. So, in our indigent defense funding stream, we have some programs that are working to advocate for the kids to even get them the access to the education that they're willing and interested in pursuing, or to the jobs that they can't get because they have collateral consequences that affect their ability to get a particular license, or a permit, or something that's required of the job. So, yes, we're seeing this not only all across a lot of our reentry grants, but some of our indigent defense grants, and some of our other funding streams and projects as well.

Cassy Blakely:

Thank you so much. Christal and Debbie, I'm going to go back to a couple of questions that were left over from your presentation. Have you implemented any type of credit recovery program so that youth can get credit for their schooling done while in custody?

Christal Carmichael:

When you say credit recovery ...

Cassy Blakely:

It'd be facility-based schoolwork that they did, making sure that schoolwork would then transfer back towards credits for graduation at their home school.

Christal Carmichael:

Yeah. So that's always the case for us. So, when they are committed in a YDC, it's just like public school credits. Most of everything transfers. That's the way it should be anyway. So, it's not like they're missing any school when they get committed to a YDC. They're continuing their school, and then we just simply pull the transcripts and submit them to their traditional school they're going back to, and they should get all those credits.

Cassy Blakely:

Beautiful. I've got another one for you here. And I think this was in respect to the conversation you had about how you work with the YDCs to get youth prepared to exit and get back into school, go back to their home schools. Have you thought about bringing schools before a judge when they resist cooperating with you?

Christal Carmichael:

Yeah, I did respond individually. So, I never thought about doing that, and actually we've had quite a bit of success when we make our case to the schools in giving them a second chance. So, we have not had to take it that far. I hope we don't ever have to. I just hope that it doesn't come to that.

Cassy Blakely:

Wonderful. I know that work for partnership between your juvenile services, your communities, your community programs, your schools, your facilities is really a big piece of R2R and the work that your staff do.

Christal Carmichael:

It is.

Cassy Blakely:

So, one more question for you and then I'll offer a closing question to the panel. Have you used telehealth services in the

course of your programs, especially given the COVID situation, or were all of your interactions in person? And Debbie and Christal, I'm going to ask you to take this first, and then I am going to open it up to Alameda County and Utah to answer as well.

Christal Carmichael:

Yeah. We did have to get really creative during the time we were out with COVID. So, yeah, we did use telehealth a lot, different platforms, trying to make sure we respected the confidentiality of our youth and families in doing that. But there was a time at the beginning of COVID when that was what we relied on to communicate with our young people. Even with the service planning meetings that we are attending, those were virtual, so there was a lot of virtual meetings that were being held, especially during that first year. And we're just now starting to get back to face-to-face meetings. But, yeah, telehealth was definitely something that we utilized over the course of probably two years.

Cassy Blakely:

Wonderful. Reg or DeAnn, do you want to take that for you

Reg Garff:

Yeah, telehealth, huge. We used that for our youth parole authority meetings, for parole hearings. The courts actually used some of that for online court hearings. And we used it for telehealth for therapy, for family therapy and therapy with some of the kids. Especially when you had an entire unit that was on quarantine or a youth who was in medical isolation because they had tested positive for COVID, and we wanted to make sure that they saw a clinician on a regular, almost daily basis, had somebody to talk to.

Reg Garff:

And so, yeah, telehealth was huge. So, again, one of the other things we were able to do here in our state is we took some of that COVID money, because the federal government started pushing that out, and we obtained another \$1 million grant, and we expanded Wi-Fi and bandwidth in every one of our facilities so that we could continue to have that. Because what's the other thing we used it for? Visitation. And so, as we saw that huge push to move to telehealth, it's not going away. What we've discovered is that we can use that in a face-to-face setting as well. Where families are having trouble traveling because of distance, they can participate via telehealth.

Reg Garff:

So, our participation rates by family in child and family team meetings has gone up. Our participation rates of families in parole hearings have gone up because we can bring them in that electronic format.

Reg Garff:

Visitation. Huge, right?

Cassy Blakely:

Thank you so much. Deputy Sheppard, I'll let you comment on the use of telehealth at Alameda County.

Terrence Sheppard:

Yes. It was definitely used in our facility to a large degree due to COVID. Youth participating in home visits that couldn't happen in person, youth participating in different things like medical and whatnot. But quite a few of our things still stayed in the same spirit as prior to COVID, which was face-to-face. A lot of our medical staff met with our kids face to face in our facilities. So, we used it some, but it wasn't like it was the entirety of what we were using at that time.

Cassy Blakely:

Wonderful. Thank you so much.

Cassy Blakely:

And I'm going to give a big thank you as we wrap up to all three locations and to the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention for supporting solicitations that allowed each of these panelists to create, roll out, modify, enhance, and then evaluate these really impactful programs across the country. I encourage all of our participants to reach out to any of these panelists afterwards for more information.

Cassy Blakely:

The recording and slide deck will be available on the National Reentry Resource Center website by mid-May. Also, I'll put one final plug in to say that the fiscal year '22 Second Chance Act Youth Reentry funding out of the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention is currently open. So go check that funding and other OJJDP funding out, and consider applying to enhance services, supports, and planning in your local jurisdictions.

Cassy Blakely:

With that, join me in one last thank you to our panelists, and then enjoy the rest of your week.

ENDS [01:30:50]

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