



# Engaging Families, Schools, and Community

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# Session Objectives



- Review recommended best practices to involve families and schools
- Explain the research related to family and school engagement and outcomes in JDTC programs
- Consider practices to strengthen family, school, and community connections and engagement.



# JDTCs in Context



JDTCs are an effective juvenile justice system intervention informed by research on the risk/need/responsivity approach to services and supervision.



- Identify risks and needs associated with delinquent behavior
- Focus on and address dynamic (changeable) risk factors
- Risk factors can include
  - poor parental relationships/parenting
  - poor school performance



# Bad News/Good News!

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- Poor school performance and poor parental relations/supervision can be risk factors for re-offending

**BUT**

- They are also dynamic factors that can be changed and become protective factors/ strengths in a youth's life

# Best Practice Recommendations Families



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**What is one thing your JDTC  
team does to involve parents?**



## Research Findings: Families & JDTCs

A common predictor of failure in the JDTC program is lack of parental support.

When parents/guardians do not support the court(s), there is a greater likelihood that youth in the JDTC will not succeed.

Research shows that youth's behavior and demeanor are directly linked to their parents' willingness to participate.





# Best Practices Recommendations: Families

JDTCs should be deliberate about **engaging parents** or guardians **throughout the court process**, which includes **assessing the specific barriers** to their full engagement.

# Specific Practices

## **TO HELP YOUTH SUCCEED IN PROGRAM AND ACHIEVE LASTING BEHAVIOR CHANGE:**

- Have at least one parent or guardian present for court.
- Communicate respect, value, and fairness to the youth and family (follow hallmarks of procedural fairness).
- Include parents or guardians in all intake procedures, in initial treatment planning, and in on-going case planning.
- When a parent/guardian is not able to be engaged, seek to engage another adult relative, mentor, recovery coach, other caring adult the youth identifies .

# Best Practice Recommendations: Families cont'd

JDTCS should make accommodations for those with hearing deficiency and identify other barriers that may impact communication.

JDTCS should work collaboratively with parents and guardians throughout the court process to encourage active participation in (a) regular **court hearings**, (b) **supervision of their children** in the home and community and (c) **treatment programs**.

# Specific Practices

- Identify barriers that may impact a family's participation and develop way to overcome those barriers.
- Offer materials that are written in a simple, yet informative manner.
- Make professional interpreters available.



# Specific Practices

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## a) Make court hearings inviting and accessible

- Schedule court at times that parents can attend and offer participation options – in-person or virtual
- Be welcoming, thank parents for their efforts to be present
- Provide incentives for parent attendance
- Offer snacks after court hearings; offer monthly or quarterly family time after court for meals and fun activity

## b) Support parenting efforts

- Connect to services to address basic needs (housing, utilities, food, transportation, childcare)
- Offer parent education or support group to connect with other parents
- In court, commend parenting efforts (small and big efforts) since the last court hearing



## Specific Practices cont'd

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### c) Involve parents in treatment planning and service activities

- Offer home-based treatment services
- Offer treatment support to address parents' mental health or substance use needs
- Explain behavior change goals and activities that treatment is working with youth on

# **Denver Youth and Family Treatment Court's (YFTC) Approach:**

## **Family Engagement Component**

# Barriers To Family Engagement

- Fear of being viewed as bad parents
- Feel their input is not valued in the decision-making process
- Financial pressures and barriers
- Parental history with justice and/or child welfare system(s)
- Time pressures and barriers — especially for working parents
- Transportation pressures and barriers
- Disengaged from the youth — i.e., youth has burned his or her bridges with parents
- Need to focus on other children
- Family dysfunction
- Parental substance use or mental health disorder
- Other barriers?



# Exercise

## **DISCUSS STRATEGIES FOR OVERCOMING ONE OF MORE OF THE BARRIERS:**

- Fear being viewed as bad parents
- Feel their input is not valued in the decision-making process
- Financial pressures and barriers
- Time pressures and barriers — especially for working parents
- Transportation pressures and barriers
- Disengaged from the youth — i.e., youth has burned his or her bridges with parents
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- Other barriers

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**List a strategy your group  
came up with**



# Strategies

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- Support families before and after challenges arise.
- Ensure families are involved in decision making processes at the individual, program, and system levels. This assists with buy in and in understanding reasons for resistance or difficulties that parents experience
- Strengthen families through varied and individualized treatment options.

# Tips For Family Engagement

- Locate the single point of parental contact in the family early in the JDTC process — intake or initial treatment session. Secure commitment and orient parent(s).
- Have a family navigator as a team member
- Consider creating a family peer mentor or “parent partner” program; if feasible, develop a family support group.
- On quarterly basis, and utilizing data, address barriers to success for families.
- Conduct “mapping exercise” to determine if service and treatment needs are being properly addressed.
- Create and maintain handbook for families
- Have judge take active role on the bench to engage parents

# Juvenile Drug Treatment Court Resources



## Family Engagement in Juvenile Drug Treatment Courts



# Best Practice Recommendations Schools



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## What does your team do to involve school-related professionals?

① Start presenting to display the poll results on this slide.



## Research Findings: School & JDTCs

School is an important protective factor.

Poor academic performance is a risk factor that is linked to recidivism.

Youth who do not attend school may have higher numbers of delinquency referrals than those who do attend.

Recovery schools have been found to be effective in supporting recovery and enhancing academic performance.





# Best Practice Recommendations: Schools



The **team should include participants from local school systems**, with the goal of overcoming the educational barriers JDTC participants face.

# Specific Practices

- For the team's **education representative**, consider:
    - Juvenile attorneys with expertise in education rights and school resources
    - Teacher Ed faculty/Graduate students at local universities with expertise in school culture, resources, education rights
    - Partnering with
      - Communities in School staff
- <https://www.communitiesinschools.org/>
- <https://www.communitiesinschools.org/network/?z=1740082157001>
- Recovery High School staff



# Best Practice Recommendations: Schools

The JDTC should have access to and **make appropriate use of evidence-based treatment services that address** the risks and needs identified as priorities in the youth's case plan, including such factors as trauma, mental health, quality of family life, **educational challenges**, and criminal thinking.

# Specific Practices

## **Use case and treatment plans to set goals around education and to identify and address educational challenges**

- If school is a trigger, have PO and treatment provider work with youth on strategies for addressing trigger (change school, class schedule, teacher)
- Identify and use individualized incentives to motivate/sustain school-related behavior change
- Work with youth, parents, and school personnel to obtain educational assistance assessments (IEP, 504 plan)
- If school attendance or assignments are challenges, work with youth on
  - Time management
  - Reliable transportation
  - Tutoring services on campus or through other option



# JDTC Best Practices: Schools

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Participants should be encouraged to practice and should receive help in practicing **prosocial skills** in domains such as work, **education**, relationships, community, health, and creative activities.

# Specific Practices

## **Connect youth to opportunities for education-related prosocial skill building and practice**

- Encourage and support participation in school clubs and activities (normal adolescent development)
- Develop safety plans to enable youth to participate in special events (field trips, prom or homecoming – normal adolescent rites of passage)



# Judicial – Academic Partnerships For Juvenile Drug Treatment Courts

A Technical Assistance  
Bulletin



Scan me!

NCJFCJ

## Specific Practices

Explore **university partnerships**/resources for **education-related prosocial skill building and practice**

- Career day
- Campus trips
- Recreational activities (sports, games, concerts)
- Mentoring
- Tutoring





# TIPS FOR SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT

- In case planning with youth, make educational goals a priority
- Offer flexible strategies for communicating with school personnel – via email, skype, text in order to share updates
- Explore the full range of educational opportunities
- Consider holding some JDTC court sessions at the school or community center
- Ensure that school representative present for staffing/court if possible.
- Involve the school social worker and the IEP process





# Juvenile Drug Treatment Court Resources



## Training and Technical Assistance

Submit your request for training and technical assistance.

## Join the JDTC Listserv

Connect with the JDTC community, share ideas, and access support.

## Tune-In-Tuesday Webinar Series

Tune-In-Tuesdays will occur each quarter and will provide JDTC team members with practical tools to address common challenges in JDTC programs.

## Interactive JDTC Map



# Thank You

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