

A Change for our Future

This workshop was developed by Juveniles for Justice, a group of youth advocates who are committed to improving access to higher education for youth like themselves who have been involved in the juvenile justice system

HIGHER EDUCATION
PLANNING FOR
JUVENILE JUSTICE-
INVOLVED YOUTH



Juveniles for Justice is a youth engagement program of Juvenile Law Center. The program includes youth who are or have been in the juvenile justice system. Juveniles for Justice offers the youth an opportunity to assess the juvenile justice system's strengths and weaknesses, and then develop and implement advocacy projects to improve the system based on the youth's research and personal experiences.

Members of 2015-2016 Juveniles for Justice:

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SECTION 1: HOOK

This section of the workshop is intended to draw in your audience through the presentation of jarring statistics regarding educational attainment for justice-involved youth.

DID YOU KNOW?

Only **15 percent** of juvenile justice-involved youth graduate from high school after being incarcerated?

Only **1 percent** of juvenile-justice involved youth go on to graduate from college?

SECTION 2: YOUTH INTRODUCTIONS

This section of the workshop is intended for the youth presenters to introduce themselves

JUVENILES FOR JUSTICE (J4J)

Juveniles for Justice is a youth engagement program of Juvenile Law Center. As youth who are currently in, or have been through, the juvenile justice system, we use both research and our own experiences to evaluate the system and advocate for reform.

MEET OUR YOUTH:



SECTION 3: PROJECT INTRODUCTION

This section of the workshop is intended to introduce the project.

This year, we are working on the issue of access to higher education. From our personal experience in the system, we know that there are not enough opportunities or support to access higher education for justice-involved youth. We believe that there should be more support in facilities to help youth further their education. Part of our project involves putting on this workshop to help facility staff better support youth in their pursuit of higher education.

SECTION 4: RECOMMENDATIONS

This section of the workshop is intended to identify specific recommendations J4J has developed to improve access to higher education for youth in the juvenile justice system

Problem: Youth in Juvenile Justice Facilities Lack the Opportunities and Support They Need to Access Higher Education

In our experience in juvenile justice facilities, we were not provided opportunities or encouragement to pursue higher education. The coursework in these facilities often isn't challenging enough to prepare youth for college. Also, without the support and encouragement of knowledgeable teachers and counselors, youth can feel as though college is not a viable option for them. Additionally, for many youth college feels financially unaffordable. It is unsurprising that less than one percent of youth in the juvenile justice system go on to graduate from college.

Recommendations for Change:

- **Create a Higher Education Plan for Every Youth:** Each youth should have a written, individualized plan that includes concrete steps for finishing high school/GED inside or outside of the facility and includes goals and plans to pursue higher education. This plan should be completed by the youth and their counselor, social worker, or team leader. To ensure each youth is prepared to pursue post-secondary education, the facility should provide support staff (i.e. counselors, social workers, teachers, principals, etc.) to assist students in completing a higher education plan that includes the following steps:
 - Meeting with the youth to discuss the youth's goals, plans and concerns for higher education as well as career and vocational goals and reviewing the youth's academic progress to ensure that they are on-track to pursue these opportunities;
 - Determining how many credits the youth has and how many they need to graduate;
 - Researching available higher education opportunities based on the youth's plans and interests;
 - Determining what institutions would be a good fit for the youth (academically, financially, socially);
 - Compiling the necessary personal identification documents for youth to begin the application process;
 - Registering youth for and transporting youth to SAT/ACT, placement tests;
 - Completing the FAFSA and researching and applying for additional financial aid/scholarships;

- Completing college applications, including essays and interviews, if applicable. Placement facilities must be provided with and utilize a standardized form for recording youth's plans for pursuing higher education.

- **Hire Qualified Support Staff to Implement Higher Education Plan:** Juvenile justice facilities should provide sufficient supportive staff members including guidance counselors, social workers, and mentors to help youth create this plan for higher education. Social workers or guidance counselors at placement facilities should meet twice per week with students to both create and review higher education plans using the provided template. If placement facilities do not have the necessary resources to meet one-on-one with students twice per week, supportive staff may host group meetings with students who have similar interests or educational goals. In order to connect with the youth about their goals for higher education, staff need to learn about the youth's aspirations and hopes for their future.
- **Expose Youth to Higher Education Opportunities:** Youth should be exposed to a broad range of higher education opportunities while in placement. Youth should have the opportunity to go on college visits, in addition to accessing college's promotional materials and videos. The goal is not only to provide concrete resources to youth, but also to foster youth's interest in obtaining higher education and confidence necessary to do so. Students in placement should be required to attend college visits and talks by career counselors beginning in 10th grade. If youth are reluctant to consider higher education as a goal, staff should help youth consider the benefits of a college education, various options in pursuing and financing higher education, and the jobs and careers that require a college degree.
- **Offer College Courses in Placement Facilities:** Youth who have their GED or high school diploma should have the opportunity to begin taking college classes in juvenile placements to prepare them for continuing their pursuit of higher education upon return to their community. College-prep courses, college-level courses, college-level internships and technical training classes should be offered to qualified students attending school in placement facilities. Coupled with the completion of a youth's higher education plan, supportive staff are responsible for helping youth determine their educational and career goals in order to decide on a course of study, particularly for courses taken while in placement.
- **Provide Job Training for Teachers in Facilities:** *Juveniles for Justice, in their 2014-2015 project titled "Improving Educational Outcomes for Youth in the Juvenile Justice System," recommended better trained teachers in facilities. The current Juveniles for Justice youth advocates expanded this training to include ways to improve access to higher education.*

Teachers should be trained to look past juvenile offenses and see their students as young people who have a desire to learn and the capacity to grow. Teachers should be well-informed in all parts of the college application process, including knowledge of important deadlines, financial aid processes and local, accessible higher education options so that they are able to act as a supportive resource to college-bound students.

Sasha's Story

While in the juvenile justice system, I received my high school diploma. I was told that if I graduated school I would be able to go home. After I was discharged, I did not receive any supports whatsoever. There were no questions or support about my next steps after high school. One career institute made a presentation at the facility, but that was it. Staff did ask if anyone was interested in this school, and said that they would follow up, but when the time came it never happened. I would love to go to college, but I never had help applying or finding a school that best fits my interests, so until then I will ask whoever I'm around for support.

SECTION 5: INDIVIDUALIZED HIGHER EDUCATION COURSE OF ACTION

This section of the workshop is intended to review the individual plan that both youth and social worker are to develop together.

To help you fulfill our recommendation of “Creating a Higher Education Plan for Every Youth”, we’ve created a template for an Individualized Higher Education Course of Action that youth and their workers can use to make sure students are on track to graduate and move on to college (see attached document).

SECTION 6: SKIT

This section of the workshop is intended to provide examples of personal experiences. This is a skit with three scenes to demonstrate the differences between pursuing higher education in an in-placement school versus a local public school. All the interactions that you'll see here are based off of our own personal experiences.

Act 1: In class

Scene 1 (good public school):

Brenden: Watch these two scenes about youth's experience in the classroom. One scene represents a school day in an in-placement school. The next scene portrays a school day at a ranked Philadelphia public school. Note the key differences.

Anahi: Good morning ladies and gentlemen! How were your weekends? Today we're going to return to where we left off last week in *The Catcher and the Rye*. Tionne, can you please summarize what you read?

Maj: Well, I think the author was making a comment on the nature of mankind...(scene fades away, cast leaves stage)

Scene 2 (placement school):

Anahi: Hey guys. I'm not your regular teacher so I don't really know what you've been doing.

Eugene: Where's Mr. Green at?

Anahi: I don't know. But I've got some crosswords for you to do. I'll be at my desk if you need me.

Eugene: Aw man. This isn't even on my level. How am I supposed to learn if we don't even have books to read!?

Act 2: SAT

Scene 1 (good public school):

Maj: I feel like I'm gonna ace the SAT! That prep course was really helpful.

Eugene: Yeah, you've got this. But if you're worried, Ms. Edwards has some after school tutoring.

Maj: Nah, man. I'm good. I think I'll pass. Are you taking it this weekend? Good luck!

Eugene: Thanks, but I'm not worried. I can always take it again if I need to.

Scene 2 (in-placement):

Anahi: The SAT? What's that?

Emani: I don't know. I think you have to take them to go to college?

Anahi: What's the point of taking it? Are we supposed to take it here?

Emani: I don't know. I guess so. I think you can if you ask for it; maybe you can ask the counselor?

Act 3: Choosing a College

Scene 1 (good public school):

Quadera: I saw that you applied to Temple and Drexel and some out of state schools. That's great! Have you gotten your decisions back?

Anahi: I got into Drexel which was my second choice and I also got into Rutgers, so I'm having a hard time deciding.

Quadera: Well, I know you're interested in chemistry. Which school has the best program?

Anahi: Actually, that's a good question. How do I find that out?

Quadera: Let's do some research online together (looks at computer). It looks like Rutgers has a great program. Are you willing to live far from home?

Anahi: I think I'm looking forward to living somewhere new. Thanks for your help! I appreciate it.

Scene 2 (in placement):

Maj: I'm ready to apply to college. Can you help me research some good schools?

Eugene: You know you need As and Bs to go to a good college. And who do you think is going to pay for that?

Maj: Don't underestimate me. I think I can do it.

Eugene: Well, maybe you should apply to community college, just in case.

Maj: Well, can I use the computer to do some research?

Eugene: Maybe. I'll talk to your worker about it. See you next week.

Brenden: Compare and contrast these two experiences. What could have been done to better serve the youth in this example?

Act 4: Conclusion

Anahi: Youth in placement aren't getting the help they need accessing higher education. We need better supportive resources for youth to succeed academically and professionally.

Emani: It doesn't take a lot of extra effort to be helpful, and to make an impact on the youth in your care. Ask more questions, spend an extra 5 minutes checking in, and show the youth that you care about them and their futures.

SECTION 7: SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

This section of the workshop is intended to start a dialogue between youth and professionals in the juvenile justice field.

You will now have the opportunity to break into small groups, where youth and staff can speak directly to each other about higher education access in juvenile justice facilities. The following is a list of youth-developed rules for respectful participation within a group:

1. Speak clearly and at a respectful volume
2. Keep calm
3. Avoid side conversations (don't subgroup)
4. Don't interrupt others while they are speaking
5. Be direct – don't beat around the bush
6. Stay on topic (no rants, no tangents)
7. Respect all answers, view and opinions
8. No profanity
9. Be an active listener (look at the person who's speaking)

Questions for Facility Staff:

1. What processes do you use to place youth in the appropriate classes/grade level upon their entrance to your facility?
2. Who develops the curriculum for the school in your facility?
3. What qualifications/certifications must teachers possess to be hired to teach in your schools?
4. What steps do your facilities take to help youth prepare to enter college or technical school upon graduation?
5. If a youth wants/needs to take a standardized test (SAT/ACT), how do they go about doing so while in placement?
6. How do you think the quality of education provided in your facilities impacts the youth?
7. What is your facility already doing to help improve access to higher education for the youth in your care?

SECTION 8: CONCLUSION

Thank you very much for being a part of today's workshop. We hope that together, we can all work to make college a reality for youth in the juvenile justice system.



Individualized Higher Education Course of Action



Introduction:

Every young person deserves the opportunity to plan ahead for their future, including plans to pursue higher education. To help facilitate this process for youth in juvenile justice facilities, Juveniles for Justice, a project of Juvenile Law Center, has created this Individualized Higher Education Course of Action guide. Teachers, social workers and other facility staff members should work with students to assist the youth in developing and following concrete steps to prepare them to successfully graduate from high school and move on to post-secondary education.

Students and facility staff should work together to complete this Individualized Higher Education Course of Action. This document should be reviewed and updated at least once per month to ensure that all responses are timely and up-to-date.

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Section 1: Learning About the Student

This section is intended to help staff gauge student's interests and goals to gain a better understanding of what students need to pursue higher education. Often, juvenile justice involved youth are not provided with the opportunity to even consider college as a goal. Asking some of these questions may help the youth open up about their aspirations, and may even get them thinking about going to college.

1. Staff: Find out how youth is doing in placement school currently.

a. What do you enjoy about school?

b. What don't you enjoy about school?

c. What would help make school better for you?

d. Do you feel as though you are getting the help/support you need? If not, what other help/support would you like to have?

2. Staff: Find out youth's interests (academic, career) and goals for the future

- a. Once you leave placement, how do you hope your schooling will be different then it was before placement and how it is in placement? How do you hope to make school a better experience?

- b. What do you see yourself doing in 5 years? *Have the youth picture what they want their day-to- day life to be like 5 years down the line. If youth have a hard time imagining what they are doing in 5 years, ask them what will they be doing to support themselves financially, OR where do they see themselves living?*

- c. Based on what you see yourself doing in the future, what level of education do you need to accomplish these goals? *Review levels and types of education- high school diploma, GED, college diploma, master's degree, Phd, technical certificate and training. The youth might not know that type of career or paycheck they can received with each level or type of education. If youth is still confused, **allow them time on the computer to research.** The PHEAA website has many helpful resources.*

3. Help youth identify 3-5 steps they must take during their remaining time in placement to move closer to their higher education goals. For example: Take the SATs, research colleges, take geometry, increase GPA.

Step 1.

When will I achieve this step? _____

Step 2.

When will I achieve this step? _____

Step 3.

When will I achieve this step? _____

Step 4.

When will I achieve this step? _____

Step 5.

When will I achieve this step? _____

Section 2: Academic Preparation Checklist

This section is intended to support students in achieving academic success in high school in order to prepare them to move on to college. Though the youth can begin to work toward these steps while in placement, they should continue to work toward their goals when they leave placement as well.

a. Current GPA: _____

GPA goal: (maintain/raise GPA): _____

Steps to maintain or raise GPA:

b. Current Number of Credits: _____

Number of Credits Needed to Graduate High School: _____

Steps to Earn Credits Needed to Graduate High School:

c. Current Coping Skills to Manage Positive Behavior in the Classroom:

New Coping Skills to Manage Positive Behavior in the Classroom:

Steps to Achieve New Skills:

d. Current Extracurricular Activities: _____

New Extracurricular Activities: _____

Steps to Begin New Activities:

Section 3: Important Discussion Topics with Youth

This section is intended to create a continued dialogue between youth and worker about their education goals. The discussion topics below may require follow up or action steps (SAT classes, college applications); while others can help the youth and the worker have a better understanding of what supports need to be in place for the youth to be academically successful.

Adult Supports

- ☐ Talk about including family or supportive adults in education decisions in placement.
- ☐ Talk about who will help support youth's education goals after they leave placement.

Finding a College

- ☐ Talk with youth about their interests, demographics, school cost, housing, etc to help them identify some programs that they might be interested in.
- ☐ Allow youth to use computer to research programs.

Paying for College

- ☐ Even if youth is not ready for college, talk about how youth could pay for college.
- ☐ Go over the FAFSA- let youth know that they might be able to file as independent under question #53.
- ☐ Make sure the youth is aware of the implications of taking out loans.
- ☐ Identify all possible scholarships and grants that the youth is eligible for.

Applying to College

- ☐ Even if youth is not ready for college, review what is needed to apply.
- ☐ Allow youth to research applications online and practice.
- ☐ Use checklists on the PHEAA website

Getting the Most out of EDU in Placement School

- ☐ Ask the youth about the work in their classes and whether or not the youth thinks they are learning what they should be learning.
- ☐ Offer suggestions for the youth to develop more skills in the classroom.

Use this page to document the meetings between youth and advisor.

Date_____

Staff Signature_____

Youth Signature_____

Date of Next Check-In _____

Sections Reviewed in the Meeting _____

Date_____

Staff Signature_____

Youth Signature_____

Date of Next Check-In _____

Sections Reviewed in the Meeting _____

Date_____

Staff Signature_____

Youth Signature_____

Date of Next Check-In _____

Sections Reviewed in the Meeting _____

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