

Building Brighter Futures

Tools for Improving Academic and
Career/Technical Education in the
Juvenile Justice System

A Pennsylvania Example

by Juvenile Law Center

ModelsforChange
Systems Reform in Juvenile Justice

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The preparation of this document was supported by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

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March 2015

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About Models for Change

Models for Change: Systems Reform in Juvenile Justice supports rational, fair, effective and developmentally appropriate responses that hold justice-involved youth accountable while improving outcomes for young people and communities. An initiative of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, it provides expertise and tools to advance reform of juvenile justice systems nationwide. Models for Change is grounded in 20 years of research, practice, and reform efforts in more than 35 states and in collaboration with federal agencies. The Models for Change Resource Center Partnership provides practitioners and policymakers with technical assistance, trainings, tools, and resources, and is anchored by four national Resource Centers focused on key areas of reform: mental health, dual status youth, status offenses, and juvenile defense. For more information about Models for Change lessons, tools, research and accomplishments, visit www.modelsforchange.net.

Foreword

**By Robert G. Schwartz, Executive Director,
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It has been inspiring to watch the Pennsylvania Academic and Career/Technical Training Alliance (PACTT) grow from an idea into a model program that improves education and life outcomes for vulnerable youth across Pennsylvania. PACTT was launched by multiple funders— the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Stoneleigh Foundation, and the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency. Participants in the MacArthur Models for Change Aftercare Initiative, especially key stakeholders in Philadelphia and Allegheny Counties, recognized a need for a collaboration to address academic and career/technical education needs. The program was nurtured and shaped by Candace Putter, whose brilliant leadership, vision, and dedication were essential to PACTT becoming a sustainable model. PACTT’s first team was superb. They brought together diverse stakeholders and institutions. They spent countless hours traveling across Pennsylvania, working with facility staff to get PACTT “right.” As they advanced a model that worked for kids, the PACTT team understood the needs of service providers. They patiently met those needs, showing a flexibility that is essential to any successful launch.

PACTT was encouraged and supported by the strong leadership of Pennsylvania’s Council of Chief Juvenile Probation Officers. PACTT is consistent with the Balanced and Restorative Justice (BARJ) goals of Pennsylvania’s juvenile justice system— community protection, accountability, and competency development— by helping the youth gain the academic and career and technical education needed to become productive citizens. Most importantly, Pennsylvania’s Department of Public Welfare, now the Department of Human Services (DHS), jumped at the opportunity to ensure that PACTT would remain embedded for years to come in Pennsylvania’s residential programs. While PACTT evolved significantly over time, DHS gave PACTT a future; DHS made it a durable part of Pennsylvania’s juvenile justice system.

We are excited to share this publication with the field. States will replicate PACTT by adjusting to their idiosyncratic systems, barriers and opportunities. The one constant, we believe, is PACTT’s vision for the children it serves. This publication is a guide to making that vision real. Our children deserve no less.

Introduction

Across the country, students in the juvenile justice system are struggling in school. Research suggests that many enter the juvenile justice system well behind grade-level. In the absence of thoughtful programming, once they enter the juvenile justice system, they may fall further behind. Too many end up dropping out of school upon return to their communities.

This publication examines one particular initiative that has shown great success in combating this problem—the Pennsylvania Academic and Career/Technical Training Alliance (PACTT)—and provides suggestions for replication in juvenile justice programming across the country. It also sets forth ideas for collecting data to measure the success of initiatives like PACTT and embedding in policy the general reform principles PACTT identified.

PACTT’s approach, of course, is not the only solution to supporting positive change and educational success for youth in the juvenile justice system. Others have successfully taken on this work—the See Forever School in the New Beginnings facility in Washington, D.C., and the PathNet and education advocate programs in Washington State are prime examples. Such programs serve as important models for improving juvenile correctional education, including recruiting qualified teaching staff, providing professional development, rethinking curricula, using the GED as a stepping stone to a sustaining career, and embedding transition specialists and education advocates to help smooth the return to a community school. We highlight PACTT here to support its innovative and thoughtful model for integrating academic and career/technical education, engaging youth, and addressing barriers to educational continuity for students in the juvenile justice system.

In this Toolkit, Juvenile Law Center highlights some of the principles and approaches PACTT has used, and identifies approaches that could be replicated and codified in policies in other jurisdictions. PACTT evolved over many years of hard work and collaboration. This toolkit is not intended to be a substitute for this day-to-day work—rather, we hope it will help jurisdictions: take the first steps toward launching needed initiatives, build on existing initiatives most effectively, and codify effective approaches in state or local policy.

Jurisdictions looking for additional detail should also review the tools provided here:

Tool I – a checklist of replicable program elements

Tool II – a checklist of policy recommendations

Tool III – a logic model for setting up data collection to evaluate initiatives

Tool IV – a set of data measures to track outcomes of initiative participants

Tool V – a digest of key relevant federal laws

Tool VI – desk manuals on PACTT for career and technical education specialists and for academic specialists

Tool VII – a sample agreement between PACTT and the facilities that agree to follow its model (“PACTT affiliates”)

Tool VIII – PACTT’s manual on fostering employability/soft skills

Tool IX – comprehensive federal administrative policy recommendations, most of which can be adapted to create state-level reform

A. The National Context

Nationwide, youth typically enter juvenile justice placements with significant educational deficits.¹ Many have already endured a myriad of barriers to educational success, including under-resourced schools, exclusionary school discipline policies, and overly-restrictive educational placements.² Moreover, factors like poverty, abuse, trauma, emotional disorders, and excessive mobility are associated with both involvement in the juvenile justice system and poor academic outcomes.³

Placement in a juvenile justice facility presents a turning point: without appropriate programming and coordination, too many youth fall further behind while in custody. Indeed, nationally, as many as two-thirds of youth drop out of school after release from juvenile facilities.⁴ PACTT’s model suggests that, despite the inevitable stress and disruption of juvenile placement, thoughtful interventions can help many youth to get back on track.

PACTT's model addresses many concerns raised around the country regarding education of youth in the juvenile justice system. In early 2013, with support from the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Juvenile Law Center, Open Society Foundations, PACTT, the Racial Justice Initiative, and the Robert F. Kennedy Juvenile Justice Collaborative convened key stakeholders from around the country in nine⁵ regional listening sessions to learn more about the educational experiences of youth in juvenile facilities. Across the country, agency staff and advocates echoed key themes about what is needed to help youth in facilities, including:

- Specialized training for teaching staff working with this high-needs population;
- Oversight, support, and collaboration from state education agencies;
- Curricula in facilities aligned with state standards;
- Strategies to ensure that youth with disabilities receive the full array of special education services to which they are entitled;
- CTE programs in facilities that are in line with industry standards and reflective of the job markets available to the youth;
- Academic credit awarded for work youth complete in facilities; and
- A streamlined process for transferring education records between the facility and home school (and vice versa).

The full list of recommendations from the listening sessions can be found in Tool IX. In short, the recommendations establish an urgent need for the kind of close attention to education issues that PACTT has provided in Pennsylvania.

B. Launching a Project

The structure and origins of PACTT are unique to the Pennsylvania context. However, elements of the experience can be instructive to other jurisdictions interested in improving academic and career and technical education opportunities for youth. That said, understanding the Pennsylvania political structures will help to contextualize some of PACTT's lessons.

Pennsylvania is a decentralized system. Each of the 67 counties operates autonomously. The 500 school districts across the state also have latitude to set their own graduation requirements and create course curricula and descriptions (as long as they comply with fairly broad state standards).

Additionally, there is no uniform provision of education services within placement facilities. The Bureau of Correction Education (a division within the Pennsylvania Department of Education) contracts with regional, public educational entities called Intermediate Units to provide education programs within Pennsylvania's state-run facilities. Some private facilities contract with the local school districts or Intermediate Units, either to provide services within facilities or to allow youth from the facilities to attend local schools. Other facilities receive a special license from PDE to run their own education programs. These programs, too, can take many forms, including alternative schools for disruptive youth, or GED test preparation only. The oversight and monitoring of programs varies widely depending on type of facility and type of program.⁶

Additionally, Pennsylvania is a state with significant court control—the juvenile court commits youth to placement, and oversees a probation department that has responsibility for developing case plans that include specific academic and/or career/technical education (CTE) goals for each youth in placement. Court rules also require the juvenile court to make findings and issue orders related to education at delinquency hearings. Thus the courts and probation play a vital role in education for young people in placement.

To promote system reform in a de-centralized system, PACTT developed a plan to work through collaboration, consensus-building, and voluntary participation rather than mandates.

1. Assess existing policies, procedures, and programs

When PACTT was first getting started, before it was eventually adopted by the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS), it built upon work that had already begun in Philadelphia County and Allegheny County (which includes Pittsburgh) through the MacArthur Foundation Models for Change Aftercare Initiative, including a thorough assessment of existing programming and processes within the facilities most utilized by the counties. An expert hired to assess the facilities' CTE offerings provided detailed feedback to the facilities, with recommendations for improvement ranging from simple low-cost changes to more ambitious reforms. While the detailed recommendations were kept confidential, an aggregate summary of the recommendations was made public.

Hiring an expert to provide guidance in a new area of program development was an important starting point, providing PACTT's original founder key information as to what types of programming and supports were needed.

2. Think strategically about where the initiative or program is housed and the associated challenges and barriers

PACTT was started by a group of independent professionals who had the support of the Pennsylvania Council of Chief Juvenile Probation Officers. In this form, they had great latitude to be innovative and aspirational. They were able to experiment and to use successes and failures to guide development of the program. On the other hand, they faced some challenges, especially related to data collection.

After a one-year transition period, over which time PACTT's philosophical approach continued to evolve, DHS assumed responsibility for PACTT. DHS turned the project from an outside program targeting designated facilities into a statewide initiative.

3. Engage Diverse Stakeholders

From the beginning, PACTT made an effort to include a diverse array of stakeholders. From early in the project, the probation staff launching PACTT involved the Bureau of Juvenile Justice Services (BJJS) in the state Department of Public Welfare—now called the Department of Human Services, the Pennsylvania Departments of Education, Labor and Industry, the providers who would actually be implementing the programming changes, non-profit organizations, and others. Other jurisdictions replicating PACTT should also consider which community members they want and need at the table, including family and youth representatives, as well as local advocacy groups. Developing these advisory groups has been key to embedding PACTT within DHS and continuing to expand its activities.

4. Consider an Affiliate Model

PACTT created a process to ensure facilities with which it worked—called “affiliates”—would meet certain standards. The provider affiliation process became an early hallmark of the PACTT model. Programs could volunteer to become PACTT affiliates by agreeing to meet specific standards in academic and career and technical education that were spelled out in the affiliation agreement. PACTT agreed to provide technical assistance and on-going troubleshooting as providers implemented changes. The initial term of affiliation was for one year, after which programs were encouraged to go through a renewal process.

Once PACTT was integrated into DHS, micro-grants of up to \$25,000 were made available for equipment and supplies necessary to implement new programming. This funding made a significant difference to facilities that had previously found it challenging to implement reforms without additional resources.

5. Use Innovative Funding Approaches

Initial funding for PACTT came from two private foundations, one national (MacArthur Foundation) and one regional (Stoneleigh Foundation), and from the State Advisory Group (Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency). As Foundation funding dropped off, the State Advisory Group, continuing to see the value in this type of programming, stepped up to sustain the momentum. While foundation funding was crucial to launching the project, it was not a sustainable model. Recognizing the value of PACTT to improving the provision of education and career and technical education to delinquent youth, DHS adopted the initiative and is currently running it as a project of the Bureau of Juvenile Justice Services.

Several elements of this funding history could be applied to other jurisdictions: (1) funding from one foundation can help to leverage funding from additional resources; (2) State Advisory Groups can improve their reach and capacity by reaching out to private philanthropies to help promote goals;⁷ (3) bringing an outside program under the auspices of a state agency can help with sustainability and scale.

6. Ensure Sustainability

PACTT now has an infrastructure supported within BJJS. Oversight for PACTT is provided by an Executive Steering Committee comprised of representatives from these state agencies and private partners: Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency, Juvenile Court Judges' Commission, Pennsylvania Department of Education, Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, Pennsylvania Council of Chief Juvenile Probation Officers, and Council of Children, Youth & Family Services.

BJJS reports out to the Executive Steering Committee during a quarterly face-to-face meeting. The Executive Steering Committee provides direction to BJJS/PACTT and makes decisions regarding how to proceed.

This built-in feedback and collaboration system has helped ensure a smooth transition and the ongoing success of PACTT.

II. PACTT Practice Components

Section One: Creating a Rigorous and Relevant Academic Program

A. Academic Excellence

PACTT employs various methods to improve the quality of education inside juvenile justice facilities in Pennsylvania. One of PACTT's core principles is that students engage more in education when they understand its relevance to their lives. To that end, PACTT urges its affiliates to connect academic courses to career preparation and technical training. This occurs on both sides—traditional academic courses involve hands-on, practical implementation of concepts learned, while CTE instructors incorporate academic standards. Explicitly linking academics and career training also helps students transfer knowledge to living wage employment.

Nationally, correctional educators frequently lack access to the training they need to be fully effective. PACTT fills this gap by providing its own training on best practices in academics and career/technical training, and on techniques to improve literacy.

With low literacy rates plaguing many students in the juvenile justice system,⁹ PACTT also encourages affiliates to integrate literacy strategies in all aspects of the curriculum, and to create a literacy and learning strategy improvement plan. Affiliates must also offer opportunities for remediation or tutoring to help youth catch up to grade level.

To help ensure academic rigor (as well as transferability of credits), PACTT requires its affiliates to align their curricula with state standards. Specifically, each affiliate must use the Pennsylvania Department of Education's Standards Aligned System and ensure its curriculum is in step with the state's Voluntary Model Curriculum. This helps provide some uniformity and oversight to the education offerings provided by facilities across the state.

The right technology and software can play a valuable role in helping juvenile facilities provide effective academic programming by allowing facility schools to offer modular education units to students.⁹ This, in turn, makes it easier for students to learn at their own pace, and to begin programs at the appropriate level, including advanced placement courses and remedial education. PACTT also requires affiliates to

provide opportunities for credit retrieval and acceleration, which includes computer-based self-paced online courses. Such options allow students in placement to make up courses and continue progressing toward graduation or beyond even if they change schools before they are able to complete a unit. These individualized electronic courses may help engage students otherwise not interested in continuing school in the traditional classroom. They also help students develop computer skills needed for employment. Computer-based learning should supplement education programs, but PACTT also emphasizes that, as a best practice, any computer-based teaching should also incorporate significant and meaningful contact with teachers; computers should not replace highly qualified staff.

B. Appropriate Academic Programs

Within the facility, and upon return to the home school, placing the student in a program appropriate to his/her own learning needs and interests is critical. PACTT encourages facilities to support students in earning the requirements of a traditional high school diploma. If the student is unable to earn sufficient credits to graduate while in placement, the next best option is for the child to complete credit recovery options to get up to grade level before departing the facility.

For students more than two years behind, continuing to attempt to earn credits may seem like a futile venture. A high school equivalency degree, such as the GED, may be a viable alternative for some youth; however, whenever possible, students should be supported in the goal of attaining a high school degree. Research has shown that while earning a GED allows young people to earn more than those who drop out of school, GED holders earn less money and are less likely to attend or graduate from college than youth who receive high school diplomas.¹⁰ As a result, the GED is used most effectively as a stepping stone to living wage employment or post-secondary education rather than an ending point in education. PACTT therefore instructs affiliates with GED programs to prepare students for careers and post-secondary education, and to revisit regularly the question of whether the individual might benefit from seeking a high school diploma.

Youth who have already graduated or earned a GED must be able to access post-secondary academic and training programs within the facility and to be supported in pursuing those options upon reentry. PACTT is currently working to forge connections with local post-secondary institutions to facilitate this. Online courses provide another post-secondary option for confined youth.¹¹

Section Two: Supporting Students in Career-Readiness

PACTT strives to make academic training relevant by linking it with career preparation. This means identifying and providing young people with skills valued and needed in the job market, giving delinquent youth the opportunity to practice their new skills in the protected setting of the facility, and making sure that the re-entry process gives youth specific opportunities to build on the academic and CTE gains they made in placement. PACTT has re-engaged many youth by aligning CTE with standards set directly by industries and creating opportunities for youth to continue training in their home communities.

A. Career and Technical Education

PACTT provides a ladder to careers with family-sustaining wages by preparing youth for fields that are in demand, offering industry-based credentials, and providing opportunities to hone both hard and soft skills.

PACTT makes it a goal that facilities offer CTE opportunities based on demand for such work in the geographic areas where young people will return after placement. Some common CTE fields include culinary arts, indoor/outdoor maintenance, and auto body welding. These courses can be taught with relatively small investments by the facility and are structured around industry-recognized competency-based standards, which, whenever possible, lead to skill certifications that employers know and value.

To ensure that CTE programs revolve around industry-based competencies and standards, PACTT sets base requirements and encourages facilities to partner with credentialing organizations. Some facilities have also opted to hire experts to assess their CTE programming.

In addition, every PACTT affiliate provides training and testing for one or more entry-level certifications. Examples include the “ServSafe” food handlers’ certificate and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration’s “10 Hour Card” for building trade workers. These certificates are widely recognized (and often required) in their respective industries and credential workers across local and state lines.

B. Employability and Soft Skills

Youth with delinquency histories, like all youth, need to develop “soft” or employability skills (also known as 21st century skills) to be successful in their careers. Soft skills are non-technical skills such as how to seek out and secure a job, manage finances, understand and meet employer expectations, and handle typical workplace issues and conflicts. Because youth with delinquency histories may have had even more limited opportunities to develop these skills than their peers, appropriate programming in juvenile justice placements is particularly important.

To build these skills, PACTT has developed the *Employability and Soft Skills Manual* (Tool VIII), which guides and standardizes the expectations for 27 key competencies. Those competencies include resume-writing, jobs searches, and life skills such as appropriate dress, budgeting, and conflict resolution. After exiting the juvenile justice placement, every young person can refer back to an employability checklist, and their own completed portfolio, which indicates the competencies he or she has mastered. Portfolios must include a youth’s resume, cover letters, certifications earned, Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) forms, and reference information.

PACTT has also developed a model for subsidized employment inside youth facilities, to allow residents to practice their soft and technical skills in a protected environment. Youth interview for jobs and work alongside regular workers in the facilities’ kitchens, offices, and on maintenance crews. Setting up these programs requires agencies to overcome administrative hurdles: completing paperwork for work permits youth can use upon release, setting up systems to make sure local, state, and federal taxes are paid when appropriate, and obtaining all needed identification including social security cards and birth certificates. However, for many young people, this is the first time they are earning wages and developing needed skills. Obtaining this paperwork positions them for employment upon release, and the experience itself improves confidence and builds the youth’s resume to put them in a better position for job searches upon re-entry.

PACTT additionally requires affiliates to provide job placement services and to connect youth with the local career counseling center ([Career Link](#)).

Section Three: Seamless Transitions and Effective Re-entry

A significant challenge for youth in juvenile justice placements occurs when the education provided in the institutional placement does not follow the same curriculum or graduation requirements as the student's home school district. When youth return from placement, they face a number of obstacles: they may be placed behind their peers, forced to repeat a grade, forced to repeat courses they have already taken because credits earned elsewhere are not accepted, or urged to complete a GED rather than re-enrolling in school. A lack of credits and inability to stay on track with peers may also lead students to become frustrated and drop out. Even when courses are aligned, youth get lost in the shuffle if enrollment documents and other records do not transfer promptly.

The curricula alignment described in Section One helps ensure home districts award academic credit for work done in facilities so students can stay on track toward a timely graduation. PACTT also encourages affiliates to coordinate with students' home districts and have a student's schedule reflect the home district's graduation requirements if the student is not expected to graduate in placement. For example, many PACTT affiliates now offer foreign language courses to allow students to meet the graduation requirements of specific school districts. As an additional step to improve credit transferability, PACTT encourages affiliates to align the actual course titles and content to those listed in that state's education data system. For example, facilities should specify that a course teaches "Algebra I" rather than simply "math."

Prompt flow of education records from the home school to the facility, and back, is critical to ensuring students stay on track to graduate on time, are in the right classes, receive the special education or disabilities accommodations to which they are entitled, and receive credit for work done. PACTT requires affiliates to seek school records quickly—no more than 10 days after admission. Similarly, school records must be sent to the receiving district at least 15 days prior to discharge.

The individualized portfolios created for each student described above also helps the home district connect the youth with the most appropriate school placement and program upon reentry. For instance, if the home district can see in the youth's portfolio that he/she has attained a certain level of certification in culinary arts, the district can seek a school placement with a culinary program. This helps ensure the youth will stay engaged in school and continue to learn concrete career skills.

Section Four: Tracking Data to Serve Individual Students, Improve Programs, and Inform Policy

Institutions seeking to replicate PACTT's program and policy improvements should collect and analyze data to evaluate their own effectiveness and implement cost effective programmatic changes most likely to benefit youth. To establish data-driven interventions, states and systems must collaborate to develop systems for tracking data that are efficient and in compliance with federal and state confidentiality laws.¹² After those agreements and relationships have been established, initiatives should create the data collection framework to track individual students, improve policies, and monitor outcomes related to educational programming within the juvenile justice system.

To support the development of a data collection system for PACTT, BJJS partnered with an external research organization, Research for Action (RFA), and the County Commissioners Association of Pennsylvania (CCAP). CCAP created the online data entry platform based on the system it administers for adult correctional facilities in Pennsylvania. CCAP had expertise in the development of the data entry system and the confidentiality and security agreements necessary for the system to get up and running.

RFA also worked with PACTT staff, BJJS and CCAP to facilitate a data work group of PACTT affiliate facilities to develop the new data system. During this process RFA developed a logic model¹³ (Tool III) based on external interviews and a literature review.

RFA's work suggests that to assess a program's effectiveness in improving education outcomes and job readiness, decreasing recidivism, and improving long-term economic self-sufficiency, researchers should consider:

- 1. Contextual Factors**, including background information about either the youth or the facility that may affect short- or long-term outcomes;
- 2. Indicators of Quality Implementation**, including the type of intervention or programs that may affect a youth's outcomes;
- 3. Exit Outcomes** measuring progress in education and job readiness that a youth has made at the point he or she leaves a facility;

4. Short-term Outcomes, assessing a youth’s progress, including educational progress, job readiness or employment, and desistance from offending behavior; and

5. Long-term Outcomes, including desistance from offending behavior and economic self-sufficiency.

RFA also developed data elements to track each of these factors. A summary of these data elements is in Tool IV.

After establishing a logic model and specifying the needed data elements, RFA worked with PACTT staff, BJJS, and CCAP to identify key data points to be incorporated into data dashboards to display information in user-friendly ways. Dashboards allow users to track data outcomes over time and compare outcomes and performance among youth. In PACTT’s case, RFA recommended data elements for two types of dashboards: (1) dashboards for individual sites in which each site creates its own customizable dashboard to have access to real-time information about the population in their care, the programs they are receiving, and outcomes for youth who have exited their facility; and (2) a dashboard for the PACTT Steering Committee with a smaller number of key metrics that the PACTT executive steering committee would receive quarterly and use to assess the progress of PACTT facilities over time. Initial dashboard indicators for the executive steering committee include: the percentage of eligible youth who enrolled in a CTE course; the percentage of eligible youth who earned a Core CTE Certificate (e.g., Safe Serve, OSHA 10, Microsoft Office Specialist, International Driver’s License); the percentage of youth who made gains in math and literacy between entry and exit; and the percentage of youth who earned a high school diploma or GED.

Data systems need to be easy to use and to be set up in such a way that staff across all affiliates can enter data in the same way. The PACTT data system uses drop down menus with clear language and defined response options and has a user-centered design and an accompanying user manual. Affiliates gave feedback on proposed language and response options throughout the development process.

PACTT had to resolve initial challenges to put in place an effective system for gathering data. First, they had to ensure that consistent metrics for youth progress were used across different sites—this was a particular challenge given the diversity of literacy and numeracy assessments used by PACTT affiliates. As a short-term solution, all providers agreed to use grade level equivalency to report youth literacy and numeracy performance. Second, researchers had to develop ways to pull data from multiple systems. This work is ongoing.

In Pennsylvania, PACTT collects its own data about facility and youth characteristics, youth engagement in education programs and exit outcomes. However, gaining data on long-term outcomes required access to several other data sources including probation and case outcomes tracked in the Juvenile Case Management System (JCMS),¹⁴ post-secondary outcomes tracked in the National Student Clearinghouse, and employment outcomes tracked by the Bureau of Labor and Industry. Finally, PACTT, like all ventures that gather data about youth outcomes, must contend with information-sharing laws designed to protect youth confidentiality. For further information and assistance in setting up appropriate information-sharing policies that comply with state and federal law, see www.jlc.org/infosharetoolkit.

III. Complying With The Law And Pursuing Policy Change

To implement an initiative like PACTT effectively, an entity must both fully utilize the resources and supports provided by existing law and policies, and partner with local and national advocates and other stakeholders to push for needed changes at the state and federal level. Law and policy can play a vital role in supporting high quality education: they can help fund effective education programming practices; establish standards for high quality academics, career/technical training, and re-entry practices; and help sustain and bring practices to scale across the state and country.

Already, many states have found innovative ways to embed effective juvenile justice-education policy in law. For example, Maine law requires that providers of education in juvenile justice facilities meet the standards set forth for all schools.¹⁵ This policy, though not common in the states, should be a baseline expectation, codified in statute in each jurisdiction. A few states explicitly require schools to recognize credits received in placement. Florida law, for example, provides a multi-pronged approach to improving credit transfers and youth re-entry to school. The statute requires transition planning and coordination, including the appointment of a transition coordinator, and requires home schools to accept full and partial credits upon students’ return from placement.¹⁶ California law similarly requires public schools to accept “full or partial coursework” completed at juvenile court schools,¹⁷ and mandates that the home school maintain education records even when a youth is placed in a facility school.¹⁸ West Virginia requires that all school districts cooperate in transferring educational records and accepting credits earned toward

graduation for youth re-entering from placement.¹⁹ States may also establish policies to ensure that highly mobile youth can receive their diploma. Maine law, for example, establishes a diploma issued by the state Department of Education for students who meet state content standards and comply with the requirements of their personal graduation plan but do not meet local graduation requirements because of high mobility.²⁰ States can also pave the way for smooth transitions back into school by placing timelines on school re-enrollment, requiring transition plans and transition teams, and requiring records to be transferred promptly.²¹

Existing federal law and policy also provide important direction on these issues. In December 2014, the U.S. Departments of Education and Justice released a comprehensive guidance package on delivering high-quality correctional education within juvenile justice facilities.²² This landmark guidance has focused new attention on the issue of education for youth in correctional facilities and upon reentry. The guidance provides a roadmap for states and local jurisdictions on how to set up an effective program, including five guiding principles to improve correctional education. It makes clear that states should:

- Ensure a school climate that prioritizes education;
- Dedicate adequate funding to support education within facilities;
- Recruit and retain qualified educators;
- Establish curricula aligned with state academic and CTE standards; and
- Develop effective cross-systems collaboration.

The guidance also clarifies that otherwise eligible students placed in juvenile justice facilities are still qualified to receive federal Pell Grants to support higher education, and provides instruction on how to comply with existing federal special education and anti-discrimination laws.

For additional information on key laws governing education in juvenile justice facilities, jurisdictions should review and analyze federal law, as well as their own state laws, to identify existing supports and requirements, as well as to identify needed policy changes. Tool V provides information on some of the most relevant existing federal laws that govern this work, specifically:

- Title I, Part D of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which funds educational programming for youth at-risk and those in the juvenile justice system;

- the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, which offers funding to support workforce readiness;
- The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, which funds special education services and establishes a set of robust educational rights for eligible students with disabilities; and
- The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, which plays a vital role in protecting confidential student information, both for individual case planning, as well as for program improvement and research.

While existing state and federal laws provide some supports for high quality education, much more remains to be done. For this reason, agency staff, policymakers, and advocates should continue to push for policy improvements at the state and federal level. In Tool II, we have spelled out key recommendations for policies that support the programs described in this publication. Additional federal recommendations appear in Tool IX.

Professionals implementing initiatives similar to PACTT in their jurisdiction should consider partnering with local advocacy organizations to promote law and policy that will help the initiative and its students succeed. If replicated, policies like these could further shore up the type of changes that PACTT has been so effective at building from the ground up.

IV. Conclusion

Youth who drop out of high school are three and a half times more likely to be arrested and eight times as likely to be incarcerated than their peers with diplomas.²³ U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder have called high-quality correctional education “one of the most cost-effective crime prevention tools we have,” citing research that a \$1 correctional education investment can cut re-incarceration costs by between \$4 and \$5 during the first three years post-release.²⁴ By imposing standards of excellence on all its affiliate facilities, PACTT has made great progress toward stemming the cycle of recidivism and helping youth gain the skills they need to escape the system and build family-sustaining careers. Replicating the PACTT model, in whole or in part, can help jurisdictions to develop high quality academics and career/technical education and establish smooth reentry services so youth can reach their full potential.

Introduction Endnotes

- 1 See, e.g., S. EDUC. FOUND., JUST LEARNING: THE IMPERATIVE TO TRANSFORM JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEMS INTO EFFECTIVE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS—A STUDY OF JUVENILE JUSTICE SCHOOLS IN THE SOUTH AND THE NATION 14 (2014), available at <http://www.southerneducation.org/getattachment/cf39e156-5992-4050-bd03-fb34cc5bf7e3/Just-Learning.aspx> (approximately 2/3 of juveniles entering state institutions were below grade level in math and reading and about 44% of youth entering local juvenile justice facilities nationwide were below grade level in reading).
- 2 See, e.g., David Domenici & James Forman Jr., *What it Takes to Transform a School Inside a Juvenile Facility: The Story of Maya Angelou Academy*, in JUSTICE FOR KIDS: KEEPING KIDS OUT OF THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM, 283, 301 (Nancy Dowd ed., 2011), available at http://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/fss_papers/3608/; PETER LEONE & LOIS WEINBERG, ADDRESSING THE UNMET EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN THE JUVENILE JUSTICE AND CHILD WELFARE SYSTEMS 10-13 (Ctr. for Juvenile Justice Reform 2d ed., 2012), available at http://cjjr.georgetown.edu/pdfs/ed_edpaper2012.pdf.
- 3 David Osher, Simon Gonsoulin & Stephanie Lampron, *Preface to ADDRESSING THE UNMET EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN THE JUVENILE JUSTICE AND CHILD WELFARE SYSTEMS*, *supra* note 2, at 1.
- 4 S. EDUC. FOUND., *supra* note 1, at 18.
- 5 We held eight listening sessions prior to developing the Recommendations, and a ninth at the April 2013 Summit on Correctional Education co-hosted by the U.S. Department of Education and the Ford Foundation, at which we presented the Recommendations. Listening sessions were held in Los Angeles, Atlanta, Boston, Washington D.C. (2), Chicago, and the Correctional Education Association's annual forum in Maryland.
- 6 JENNIFER LOWMAN & SHARI A. MAMAS, EDUC. LAW CTR., EDUCATIONAL AFTERCARE AND REINTEGRATION TOOLKIT FOR JUVENILE JUSTICE PROFESSIONALS: A TOOLKIT FOR JUVENILE JUSTICE PROFESSIONALS IN PENNSYLVANIA 13 (2d ed. 2009), available at <http://www.modelsforchange.net/publications/225>.
- 7 For additional information about this funding partnership, please see ROBERT G. SCHWARTZ, JUVENILE LAW CTR., PENNSYLVANIA AND MACARTHUR'S MODELS FOR CHANGE: THE STORY OF A SUCCESSFUL PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP (2013), available at <http://www.modelsforchange.net/publications/457>.
- 8 See TERRY SALINGER, STRATEGY GUIDE: MEETING THE LITERACY NEEDS OF STUDENTS IN JUVENILE JUSTICE FACILITIES 1 (2010), available at http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/sites/default/files/docs/adolescent_literacy_guide_201008.pdf; MINDEE O'CUMMINGS, SARAH BARDACK & SIMON GONSOU LIN, ISSUE BRIEF: THE IMPORTANCE OF LITERACY FOR YOUTH INVOLVED IN THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM 1-2 (2010), available at http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/sites/default/files/docs/literacy_brief_20100120.pdf.
- 9 For more information on how to safely utilize up-to-date technology in secure facilities, see FEDERAL INTERAGENCY REENTRY COUNCIL, MYTHBUSTER: ON EDUCATION TECHNOLOGY IN JUVENILE FACILITIES (June 2014), available at <http://www.neglected-delinquent.org/resource/reentry-mythbuster-education-technology>.
- 10 Stephanie Ewert, *GED Recipients Have Lower Earnings, are Less Likely to Enter College*, RANDOM SAMPLINGS: THE OFFICIAL BLOG OF THE U.S. CENSUS BUREAU (Feb. 27, 2012), <http://blogs.census.gov/2012/02/27/ged-recipients-have-lower-earnings-are-less-likely-to-enter-college/>. In 2009, GED holders earned, on average, \$1600 less per month than high school graduates. Additionally, 43% of GED holders completed at least some post-secondary education, compared to 73% of those with high school diplomas, and finally, although 33% of high school graduates completed college, only 5% of GED holders did. However, earning a GED typically results in much better outcomes than having neither a GED nor high school diploma.
- 11 A high-quality, legally compliant special education program is also essential to ensuring youth in custody receive an appropriate education. Because PACTT did not focus on special education services, this paper does not provide a comprehensive overview of the robust protections available to these youth under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), 20 U.S.C. § 1400 *et seq.*, and its implementing regulations at 34 C.F.R. Part 300. We would be remiss, however, if we failed to mention the IDEA's application here. For more information on the obligation to provide special education in juvenile justice settings, please review Tool V and the U.S. Department of Education's Dear Colleague Letter on the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act for Students with Disabilities in Correctional Facilities (Dec. 5, 2014), available at <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/correctional-education/idea-letter.pdf>.
- 12 For further information on setting up relationships and appropriate information-sharing policies that complies with state and federal law, see www.jlc.org/infosharetoolkit.
- 13 A logic model provides a visual representation of program contextual factors and inputs, program implementation activities and desired outcomes. Reviewing and discussing the logic model helps stakeholders to reach a shared understanding about what programming should look like and what goals the juvenile justice system education is trying to achieve, both short- and long-term.
- 14 JCMS is sponsored by chief juvenile probation officers, the juvenile court judges, research entities, and state delinquency prevention commissions.
- 15 ME. REV. STAT. ANN. tit. 20-A, § 4502(1).
- 16 WEST'S F.S.A. § 1003.52.

17 CAL. EDUC. CODE § 48645.5.

18 *Id.*

19 W. VA. CODE § 49-5-20(b).

20 ME. REV. STAT. ANN. tit. 20-A § 257-A.

21 *See, e.g., id.*; VA. CODE ANN. § 16.1-293; ME. REV. STAT. ANN. tit. 20-A § 1055(12).

22 The Department of Education also established a dedicated website, on which you can find the guidance package and other relevant content: <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/correctional-education/index.html>.

23 PENNSYLVANIA PARTNERSHIPS FOR CHILDREN, REENGAGING HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUTS AS A GROWTH STRATEGY FOR PA 1 (July 2011), *available at* http://www.papartnerships.org/publication_files/operation-restart.pdf#search=%22drop%20out%22 (internal citation omitted).

24 Attorney General Holder and Secretary Duncan's letter on the importance of providing high-quality correctional education (Dec. 8, 2014), *available at* <http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/correctional-education/csso-state-attorneys-general-letter.pdf>.

Acknowledgements

We thank the many individuals and entities that launched, nurtured, and gave PACTT a permanent home.

First, to Candace Putter, a true visionary and stalwart advocate for youth. Her dedication allowed her to turn a good idea into a sustainable and replicable enterprise. We thank Candace's core team—Dave Smith, Sue Will and Marna Goodman—and funders who made PACTT possible, in particular the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, the Stoneleigh Foundation, and the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency. We are grateful to the Council of Chief Juvenile Probation Officers, and all others who helped get the initiative off the ground and into place throughout Pennsylvania.

We thank the Bureau of Juvenile Justice within the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, for incorporating PACTT to give it a place long term, and for thoughtfully continuing and expanding the initiative's good work and reach.

We also want to thank all those who have helped us memorialize the PACTT model in this publication, so that other jurisdictions can reap the benefits of their strategies and lessons learned.

To Karen Schmidt, for her stellar design work—on this, and many Models for Change publications over the years.

To Rebecca Reumann-Moore, Tracey Hartmann and Michael Norton at Research for Action, for enriching the document with their expertise on the data elements best suited to evaluating the success of PACTT and similar initiatives.

To our wonderful colleague Jenny Collier for reviewing the federal policy portion of this publication.

To our many colleagues involved with PACTT who reviewed the document and provided valuable insights: Russell Zemanek and David Dickson at the Bureau of Juvenile Justice Services, Pennsylvania Department of Human Services; Russell Carlino, Chief Probation Officer at Allegheny County Juvenile Probation Department; and Keith Synder and Rick Steele of the Juvenile Court Judges' Commission.

Finally, we want to thank the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation for supporting the juvenile justice field through its game-changing Models for Change initiative. Special thanks to Laurie Garduque and Patrick Griffin at the Foundation, for their ongoing collaboration and assistance, and to former Juvenile Law Center Program Manager Autumn Dickman, who did a brilliant job overseeing the MFC program in Pennsylvania for almost ten years.

The success of PACTT belongs to many people—the descriptions of PACTT's work, and any mistakes in those descriptions, are our own.

