

THE FIVE DOMAINS OF WELLBEING FOR YOUTH AND YOUTH INVOLVED IN THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

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Introduction

Missouri's juvenile justice system is transforming the way youth and their families are viewed and served. This system integrates the Five Domains of Wellbeing as a foundational framework for the Missouri Division of Youth Services, which recognizes youth and their families as having assets as well as challenges and being more than simply delinquent or neglectful. The Five Domains of Wellbeing framework is used to support youth in the juvenile justice system to successfully transition back to community and make lasting positive change. Juvenile justice staff work with youth at all stages of treatment and transition planning to leverage existing and build new assets in **social connectedness, safety, stability, mastery and meaningful access to relevant resources**, while intentionally paying attention to the tradeoffs that come with all progress and change. These domains of wellbeing are critical for all people and youth, not just youth in the juvenile justice system. How youth meet their needs in each domain may look different for different youth, depending on various factors such as culture, economic status, race, and past experiences, to name a few.

This document was created to articulate the research informing the Five Domains of Wellbeing as they pertain to youth, generally, and juvenile justice-involved youth, specifically. We address youth who are involved in the juvenile justice system separately because there are characteristics of this population that raise important considerations for supporting their wellbeing. Juvenile justice system-involved youth often have disproportionate rates of experiences with destabilizing events including poverty, homelessness, physical and mental health challenges, exposure to community violence, and gang involvement. They are also disproportionately youth of color and lesbian, gay, transgender, bi-sexual and questioning (LGTBQ)—one in five youth in juvenile justice facilities identified as LGTBQ and 85% of those are also youth of color¹—and experience systematic and systemic discrimination and oppression at the individual, community and societal level. Juvenile justice system-involved youth experience higher rates of childhood trauma due to child maltreatment, family violence, and community violence than non-system involved youth.² Youth with physical, emotional and learning disabilities are arrested and incarcerated at higher rates than youth without disabilities and therefore at a higher risk for involvement in the juvenile justice system.³ The result is higher prevalence of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, depression, substance abuse and higher rates of engagement in high-risk and criminal behaviors among system involved youth compared to non-system involved youth.⁴ For many of these reasons, juvenile justice-involved youth are also often involved in other systems as well, such as the child welfare and mental health treatment systems.

The high rates of various forms of trauma, instability and health issues among youth in the juvenile justice system negatively impact these youths' wellbeing in multiple and often exponential ways. For example, housing instability creates challenges to meaningful access to education, academic mastery and the development of social skills in peer groups. Trauma survivors frequently have difficulty developing stable social relationships and often act aggressively, violently or isolate themselves, further impacting experiences of safety. And these are but just a couple of examples.

None of this is to imply that the lives of youth involved in the juvenile justice system are only marked by challenges. Like other youth, they also have a range of assets, relationships, strategies and experiences that both provide buffers to these challenges and that can be leveraged to help youth experience wellbeing and to thrive. The information presented here on the Five Domains of Wellbeing for system-involved youth

¹ Center for American Program and the Movement Advancement Project, *Unjust: How the Broken Juvenile and Criminal Justice Systems Fail LGTBQ Youth*, <https://www.lgbtmap.org/file/lgbt-criminal-justice-youth.pdf> (August 5, 2016).

² Rosenberg, Harriet J., John E. Vance, Stanley D. Rosenberg, George L. Wolford, Susan W. Ashley, and Michael L. Howard. "Trauma Exposure, Psychiatric Disorders, and Resiliency in Juvenile-Justice-involved Youth." *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice and Policy* 6, no. 4 (2014): 430-437. Youth, <https://www.lgbtmap.org/file/lgbt-criminal-justice-youth.pdf> (August 5, 2016).

³ Wagner, Mary, Lynn Newman, Renée Cameto, Phyllis Levine, and Nicolle Garza. *An Overview of Findings from Wave 2 of the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2 (NLTS2)*. (NCSE 2006-3004). (Menlo Park, CA: SRI International, 2006).

⁴ Abram, Karen M., Linda A. Teplin, Devon C. King, Sandra L. Longworth, Kristin M. Emanuel, Erin G. Romero, Gary M. McClelland, Mina K. Dulcan, Jason J. Washburn, Leah J. Welty, and Nichole D. Olson. "PTSD, Trauma, and Comorbid Psychiatric Disorders in Detained Youth." *Juvenile Justice Bulletin*. (June 2013).

is important for anyone engaging with and advocating for these youth, and includes specific guidance for juvenile justice staff who wish to reinforce existing and develop new practices and systems that support wellbeing. Indeed, paying attention to wellbeing, rather than simply problems, is key to helping youth to make lasting change.

The Five Domains of Wellbeing

The Five Domains of Wellbeing are the essential needs critical to every person's wellbeing. Regardless of our diverse histories, backgrounds, cultures and perspectives, we all share a set of universal needs: **social connectedness** to people and communities to have a sense of belonging and experience reciprocity; the **safety** of being able to express core parts of our identity without being in physical or emotional danger; the **stability** from having enough predictability in our lives that we can plan for the future and know that small obstacles won't create chaos; the experience of **mastery** that comes from knowing our own efforts can pay off and we have opportunities for control and choice in our own lives; and **meaningful access to relevant resources** to meet our basic needs without shame, danger or undue hardship. We all are hard-wired to increase our wellbeing through building assets and minimizing unsustainable tradeoffs between these domains. This is true for all people, including ourselves, our families and friends and colleagues, and the youth and families who are involved with the juvenile justice system.

The Full Frame Initiative defines the Five Domains of Wellbeing as:

Social connectedness: the degree to which a person has and perceives a sufficient number and diversity of relationships that allow her or him to give and receive information, emotional support, and material aid; create a sense of belonging and value; and foster growth.

Regardless of age, connections to other people are critical. They are sources of information, material assistance, and emotional support. Reciprocity in relationships is also important for thriving. Social isolation has a significant negative effect on wellbeing, and extended periods of isolation have been connected to a number of mental and physical health problems and illnesses among adults and youth.

Safety: the degree to which a person can be her or his authentic self and not be at heightened risk of physical or emotional harm.

Safety is experienced differently by different people, depending on personal history, community setting and events, historical context, and more. What seems safe to one person may not feel safe to another, and vice versa.

Stability: the degree to which a person can expect her or his situation and status to be fundamentally the same from one day to the next; where there is adequate predictability for a person to concentrate on the here-and-now and on the future, growth and change; and where small obstacles do not set off big cascades.

Regardless of a person's age, stability is vital to being able to plan for the future, take on new opportunities and try new things, and weather small setbacks without having everything unravel.

What are tradeoffs?

Often a decision or change we make, big or small, comes with a cost or consequence: a tradeoff. Sometimes the benefit from the decision or change outweighs the tradeoff; sometimes it doesn't. For example, leaving a gang may increase physical safety but if that gang is a youth's "tribe"—the place where they feel belonging and connectedness—or provides for the youth's basic needs, such as food or transportation, the increased feelings of safety may not be worth the experience of social isolation or the hardship of finding alternative access to relevant resources. Weighing the benefits to our wellbeing against the tradeoffs whenever we make a decision is highly personal. However, all of us are less likely to stick to a decision or sustain change when the tradeoffs are too great and significantly diminish other aspects of our wellbeing.

Mastery: the degree to which a person feels in control of her or his fate and the decisions she or he makes, and where she or he experiences some correlation between efforts and outcomes.

Mastery is not always about the acquisition of skills or mastering something. Concepts of autonomy, pride, self-esteem, self-efficacy and self-empowerment are similar to the idea of mastery. It is that “high five” feeling when efforts are paying off, where progress is seen even if the ultimate goal hasn’t been reached, and more positive change feels possible.

Meaningful access to relevant resources (meaningful access): the degree to which a person can meet needs particularly important for her or his situation in ways that are not overly onerous, and are not degrading or dangerous.

Meaningful access to resources that are relevant to each of us as individuals is a universal need. Services can be a pathway to meaningful access but are not resources themselves, and are not universal; everyone needs meaningful access to relevant resources but not everyone needs or uses services to get the resources they need. And, having services does not guarantee meaningful access to relevant resources.



Our experience of wellbeing is deeply impacted by our past experiences, present situations, beliefs, values and identities. For example:

- Past experiences of a domain may inform future experiences of that domain. A youth who grew up feeling safe in a crowded, noisy urban setting may feel very unsafe in a quiet suburban or sparsely populated rural area, even if the urban neighborhood had a lot of violence and the rural neighborhood has none.
- Past experiences may influence the way in which we meet our needs in the domains. A youth who has not experienced significant loss, abuse or neglect may be very trusting and make friends and connections easily; whereas a youth who was hurt by people he trusted may have difficulty building relationships with others.
- The way in which others respond and react to our identities impact wellbeing through a number of domains. Youth that belong to identity groups that are systematically marginalized and oppressed, such as Black youth, are more likely to be viewed

and described as behaving in ways that are maladaptive, menacing, resistant to authority, not resilient, and more. These views and descriptions inform and direct the type and level of interventions the youth experience, which tend to be disproportionately punitive, controlling, or intentionally isolating. This in turn further marginalizes these youth and creates barriers to all Five Domains of Wellbeing.⁵

The Five Domains of Wellbeing Are Deeply Interconnected

The Five Domains of Wellbeing are not unrelated sections of people’s lives, to be addressed separately or in a strictly linear way. Every person is hard-wired to strive to meet their needs for *all* Five Domains of Wellbeing simultaneously—not one at a time—and not in any particular or set order. Because of the interconnected and

⁵ Payne, Yasser Arafat and Tara M. Brown. “The Educational Experiences of Street-Life-Oriented Black Boys: How Black Boys Use Street Life as a Site of Resilience in High School.” *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* 26, no. 3 (2010). 316-338.

even interdependent nature of the domains, a person's ability to experience overall wellbeing is contingent upon having enough assets in each of the domains at any given time to also weather challenges or deficits in any or all of the domains.

A person may build assets in one domain by building assets in a different domain or domains. For example:

- Putting in effort and having a reputation of being really good at an after-school job may result in a raise in wages, which in turn means being able to contribute more to the family's weekly grocery bill (mastery and meaningful access to relevant resources).
- The stability that comes from attending one school throughout the entire school year (instead of changing schools) can help youth make and maintain meaningful social connections (stability and social connectedness).

A person may build assets in one domain in ways which decrease assets (or increase challenges) in a different domain or domains. For example:

- A youth whose family experiences chronic financial instability may engage in illegal behavior in order to contribute to the family's income and survival (increasing stability and meaningful access while decreasing safety).
- The need for peer acceptance is so high during adolescence that youth may engage in high-risk behaviors to fit in with their peer group or to join another peer group. A youth is far more likely to run a red light if a peer is also in the car than if they are alone (increasing social connectedness while decreasing safety). A youth who has mental health challenges may refuse to participate in treatment for fear of social stigma, and instead may self-medicate with alcohol or drugs (increasing social connectedness while decreasing stability and safety).

And of course, experiencing challenges in one domain may create additional or new challenges in a different domain or domains. For example:

- A youth whose family becomes homeless and has to enter into an emergency shelter may lose the stability of their daily routine and connections to their friends (decreases in meaningful access to relevant resources decrease stability and social connectedness.)
- A youth who moves to a different home or community every few months (e.g., whose parents are in the military or change jobs often) may experience severe stress related to chronic instability or the unpredictability of certain conditions, and may cope by experimenting with high-risk behaviors to mask other feelings of stress (decreased stability and decreased safety).
- A youth who does not have access to a laptop and the internet, books or even breakfast every day has fewer opportunities, or even less energy to expend, to experience learning new things, getting better at them, and making choices about his or her interests and hobbies (challenges in meaningful access to relevant resources decrease opportunities for mastery).

While these examples are only but a few of the many ways people experience the interconnectedness of the domains, they clearly illustrate how trying to increase assets in a domain or make progress in one area of life requires trading off something in another area of life. In the very first example used above, the youth who is doing so well at an afterschool job that they earn more money and therefore access to food, is choosing that job over some other activity or way of spending time, which means making a tradeoff in another domain. For example, that youth may miss out on hanging out with friends because they're at work but they've decided (at least for now) that the tradeoff of less social connectedness after school is worth the experience of mastery and meaningful access to resources.

The Five Domains of Wellbeing Research and Implications:

SOCIAL CONNECTEDNESS

Social Connectedness for Youth and Youth Involved in the Juvenile Justice System

Social connectedness is particularly relevant during adolescence, the developmental period lasting from approximately age 11 to 21 characterized by rapid biological, cognitive, emotional, and social development. During this transition between childhood and adulthood, adolescents experience tremendous brain growth and development, and begin to develop social connections independent of their caretakers and other adults' influence and control.

Youth need both adult and peer relationships for positive and healthy development. Bonds with peers allow youth to establish intimate ties with age-mates who share similar interests, goals, and aspirations. Bonds with adults provide youth with the role models necessary to develop critical cognitive, emotional, social, and other skills needed to navigate life. Relationships with adults also help youth learn about and gain access to relevant and necessary resources. Youth also need to experience reciprocity. Those who provide support to peers and others develop empathy and more sophisticated social skills, both key components of positive youth development.^{6,7}

During this period in their development, adolescents test rules and boundaries. They are driven by their need to develop autonomy and independence and to have new experiences. They begin to develop their own value systems and critical thinking skills, and question whether or not they are "normal."⁸ As youth begin to explore their own identities and define their own social connections, connections to caretakers and other adults remain important but acceptance by their peers is crucial. This may lead them to weigh acceptance by peers more heavily as they consider the tradeoffs of their actions and decisions. Here, we review considerations when thinking about social connectedness in the lives of youth in general and juvenile justice-involved youth in particular.

Youth and Social Connectedness

Relationships with caretakers and other adults:

- Although adolescence is a time of increasing autonomy, for most youth, their caretakers continue to be a primary source of emotional and material support and information. During adolescence, caretaker-/parent-child relationships change but continue to be significant.⁹
- Happiness for adolescents includes having positive relationships with both adults and their peers.^{10,11}
- Positive connections outside of the family may be a protective factor against limited family support and family conflict. Youths' romantic relationships and their support networks may help them meet material and emotional needs that are not met at home.^{12,13}
- Mentorship, particularly from adults, has been linked to a variety of positive outcomes: 1) social emotional (e.g., improving coping skills, practicing emotion regulation skills); 2) cognitive (e.g., academic achievement, improvement in vocational outcomes); and 3) identity formation (e.g., future orientation, mastering new experiences). Mentorship has also been linked to decreases in

⁶ Martinez, Damian J. and Laura S. Abrams. "Informal Social Support Among Returning Young Offenders: A Metasynthesis of the Literature." *International Journal of Offender Therapy and Comparative Criminology* 57, no. 2 (2013). 169-190.

⁷ Stepick, Alex, Carol Dutton Stepick, and Yves Labissiere. "South Florida's Immigrant Youth and Civic Engagement: Major Engagement: Minor Differences." *Applied Developmental Science* 12, no. 2 (2008). 57-65.

⁸ Steinberg, Laurence. "Risk Taking in Adolescence: New Perspectives from Brain and Behavioral Science." *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 16, no. 2 (2007). 55-59.

⁹ Proctor, Carmel L., P. Alex Linley, and John Maltby. "Youth Life Satisfaction: A Review of the Literature." *Journal of Happiness Studies* 10, (2009). 583-630.

¹⁰ Brown, B. Bradford and Jeremy P. Bakken. "Parenting and Peer Relationships: Reinvigorating Research on Family-Peer Linkages in Adolescence." *Journal of Research on Adolescence* 21, no. 1 (2011). 153-165.

¹¹ Proctor, et al., 583-630.

¹² Martinez and Abrams, 169-190.

¹³ Tajima, Emiko A., Todd I. Herrenkohl, Carrie A. Moylan, and Amelia S. Derr. "Moderating the Effect of Childhood Exposure to Intimate Partner Violence: The Roles of Parenting Characteristics and Adolescent Peer Support." *Journal of Research on Adolescence* 21, no. 2 (2010). 376-394.

high-risk behaviors. However, not all mentorship is equally beneficial. Improved outcomes are the result of mentorship relationships that last 12 months or more and that are perceived by youth to be highly supportive.^{14,15}

Relationships with peers:

- During adolescence youth begin to develop their first intimate relationships outside of their families and peers become major sources of emotional and informational support.¹⁶
- Youth are more likely to try new experiences in the context of an accepting peer group than they are on their own. The desire to be accepted and part of the “in” crowd leads youth to conform and to try new things, both positive and risky.¹⁷
- Regular exposure to positive and supportive peer relationships during adolescence can help protect youth from negative social experiences later in life. In turn, peer rejection during adolescence is linked to negative outcomes including depression, anxiety, and aggression.^{18,19}
- The feeling of having shared experiences, values and interests is heightened through social media and the volume of people one can connect to. Some youth experience an increased need in belonging and in popularity (i.e., fear of missing out—FoMO) as a result of increased use of social media. Increased FoMO is associated with increased stress, which they may not have adequate experience to manage. This may increase risk of poor mental health and antisocial and risk-taking behavior.²⁰
- Experiences of trauma in childhood can complicate social connections by interfering with a youth’s ability to trust others and the environment, and heighten their reactions to stress and perceived threats. Trauma has been linked to aggression, which can lead to isolation from peers and others.^{21,22}

Juvenile Justice-Involved Youth and Social Connectedness

- Youth involved in the juvenile justice system often belong to large and complex social networks that include members other than parents and siblings who are invested in the youth’s successful development and who provide key emotional and material support.^{23,24}
- Adult staff members in juvenile justice treatment settings often take on the role of mentor. Youth in the juvenile justice system who have positive relationships with staff during treatment often feel more successful once they’ve left treatment facilities and rejoined their communities than youth who do not have positive relationships.²⁵

¹⁴ DuBois, David L., Nelson Portillo, Jean E. Rhodes, Nadia Silverthorn, and Jeffrey C. Valentine. “How Effective Are Mentoring Programs for Youth? A Systematic Assessment of the Evidence.” *Psychological Science in the Public Interest* 12, no. 2 (2011). 57-91.

¹⁵ Rhodes, Jean E., Ranjini Reddy, and Jean B. Grossman. “The Protective Influence of Mentoring on Adolescents’ Substance Use: Direct and Indirect Pathways.” *Applied Developmental Science* 9, no. 1 (2005). 31-47.

¹⁶ Beyer, Marty. “A Developmental View of Youth in the Juvenile Justice System.” In *Juvenile Justice: Advancing Research, Policy, and Practice*, edited by Francine T. Sherman and Francine H. Jacobs, 1-23. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2011.

¹⁷ Sullivan, Christopher J., Kristina K. Childs, and Daniel O’Connell. “Adolescent Risk Behavior Subgroups: An Empirical Assessment.” *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 39, (2010). 541-562.

¹⁸ Brown and Bakken, 153-165.

¹⁹ Prinstein, Mitchell J. and Julie W. Aikins. “Cognitive Moderators of the Longitudinal Association between Peer Rejection and Adolescent Depressive Symptoms.” *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology* 32, no. 2 (2004). 147-158.

²⁰ Beyensa, Ine, Eline Frisonb, and Steven Eggermontb. “I Don’t Want to Miss a Thing: Adolescents’ Fear of Missing Out and Its Relationship to Adolescents’ Social Needs, Facebook Use, and Facebook Related Stress.” *Computers in Human Behavior*, 64, (2016). 1–8.

²¹ Beyer, 1-23.

²² Maschi, Tina, Thalia MacMillan, Keith Morgen, Sandy Gibson and Matthew Stimmel. “Trauma, World Assumptions, and Coping Resources Among Youth Offenders: Social Work, Mental Health, and Criminal Justice Implications.” *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal* 27, (2010). 377-393.

²³ Abrams, Laura S. “From Corrections to Community.” *Journal of Offender Rehabilitation* 44, no. 2-3 (2007). 31-53.

²⁴ Laub, John H. and Robert Sampson. *Shared Beginnings, Different Lives: Delinquent Boys to Age 70*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003.

²⁵ Marsh, Shawn C., William P. Evans, and Michael J. Williams. “Social Support and Sense of Program Belonging Discriminate between Youth-Staff Relationship Types in Juvenile Correction Settings.” *Child and Youth Care Forum* 39, (2010). 481-494.

- Experiencing positive social events that provide opportunities to build social skills, connections and capital (e.g., working at a job with peers) has a positive cumulative effect and is associated with decreased offending among juvenile offenders.²⁶
- Youth in the juvenile justice system often face instability in many parts of their lives (e.g., intrapersonal, family, community, residential, health and mental health) which interferes with the ability to make and maintain positive and long-term social connections. Indeed, many youth involved in the juvenile justice system report feeling they lack the skills to seek and maintain positive relationships. This increases their risk for social isolation or continued interaction with peers who encourage or engage in risky or illicit behavior.²⁷
- For youth who are parents themselves, a sense of connection and responsibility to their children may protect them against engaging in later criminal behavior, provided they have the financial resources to adequately support their children and themselves.^{28,29}
- Parents and other caretakers are often a crucial source of access to treatment options (e.g., are the gatekeepers to financial support or adult authorization for services and healthcare), and a stable source of support for youth during the process of transitioning from treatment back to community. Parents that have reasonable and realistic expectations during this transition instead of expectations that are too high (i.e., stable employment within one month) may help decrease the risk for recidivism.^{30,31}
- Negative relationships with caretakers (due to caretaker neglect, substance use, or maltreatment) may affect how well a youth does in treatment and can also increase their risk for recidivism.³²

Implications for Juvenile Justice Systems and their Staff

- **Validate the purpose of relationships and behavior.** Recognize and make part of the treatment process the reality that “negative” social functioning behaviors and relationships have served a protective function for many system-involved youth. Validating *the purpose* these relationships and behaviors have served for the youth does not mean validating the relationship or behavior itself. Validating the purpose of the relationship or behavior will help youth begin to form a trusting relationship with staff, which may help youth and staff work together more productively.
- **Encourage early identification of positive peers or mentors.** Beginning early in residential treatment (rather than shortly before release), work with youth to identify who in their communities they consider a positive peer or mentor influence (including adult family members), and intentionally work to foster and strengthen these relationships. These individuals, if willing, can be included as important members of a youth’s transition team.
- **Repair and strengthen relationships with adult caretakers.** Parents and other caretakers are often key sources of material and emotional support for youth, even in families with histories of trauma, neglect and violence. Helping youth repair and strengthen relationships with adult caretakers is critical to long-term successful transition back into community. If youth who have been traumatized at home will return to their family home, and/or identify their family

²⁶ van den Berg, Chantal, Catrien Bijleveld, Jan Hendriks, and Irma Mooi-Reci. “The Juvenile Sex Offender: The Effect of Employment on Offending.” *Journal of Criminal Justice* 42, (2014). 145-152.

²⁷ Sealock, Miriam D. and Michelle Manasse. “An Uneven Playing Field: The Impact of Strain and Coping Skills on Treatment Outcomes for Juvenile Offenders.” *Journal of Criminal Justice* 40, (2012). 238-248.

²⁸ Martinez and Abrams, 169-190.

²⁹ Pinderhughes, Ellen E., Karen T. Craddock, and LaTasha L. Fermin. “Adolescent Parent and the Juvenile Justice System.” In *Juvenile Justice: Advancing Research, Policy, and Practice*, edited by Francine T. Sherman and Francine H. Jacobs, 174-196. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2011.

³⁰ Hart, Jessica L., Siobhan K. O’Toole, Jana L. Price-Sharps, and Thomas W. Shaffer. “The Risk and Protective Factors of Violent Juvenile Offending.” *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice* 5, (2007). 367-384.

³¹ Martinez and Abrams, 169-190.

³² Ibid.

relationships as significant to them, it is critical to address family trauma during treatment. Staff should also work directly with parents and caretakers to ensure they have support and to manage expectations (e.g., chores, curfew, etc.) when the youth return home.

- **Support youth in establishing new positive social ties.** Youth are highly unlikely to abandon social networks, even those that put them at risk in other domains, without having other relationships or places where they feel a sense of belonging and reciprocity—the tradeoffs of losing social connections simply won't be worth it. Without significant support and help, youth are at risk for social isolation or, if the tradeoffs of cutting ties are too great, re-engaging with peers who encourage high-risk and illegal behaviors. Further, because juvenile justice staff often play key mentorship roles for youth while in treatment, losing that stable relationship post-treatment may put youth at further risk for engagement with high-risk relationships. Juvenile justice staff should therefore help youth to establish new or additional positive social relationships (such as through new extracurricular or community-based activities) prior to helping youth disconnect from other relationships, and as a key part of the transition plan from very early on in treatment. This supports youth to minimize tradeoffs and make it worth it to maintain new, positive social ties in the long term.
- **Work with youth to identify how trauma and triggers can impact development of new social connections.** Address how mental health, and other challenges and behaviors, can interfere with forging new social connections. Work with youth to identify behavioral triggers for anger and how trauma may lead to distrustfulness, aggressiveness and acting out in relationships and how those behaviors impact others (e.g., leading other people to want to stay away). Staff and youth can also explore how symptoms of depression and PTSD (e.g., feeling unworthy, numbness, anger) can lead to social isolation.
- **Support youth in staying connected to each other.** To help stability carry over to community and to support youth in maintaining positive connections to their peers once they return to their community, juvenile justice systems might want to provide options that allow youth to stay connected to each other. Youth who have a sense of mastery around social and emotional skills can serve as significant peer role models to other youth in treatment and can also be important sources of stability for each other during and after residential treatment.
- **Reinforce the value of social interaction and reciprocity.** Since reciprocity is an important part of social connectedness, juvenile justice staff can explore with youth how they feel about the support they provide for others. For example, giving youth credit for positive social interactions can help youth prone to isolation to begin to see the merits of social interaction. Staff should positively acknowledge how youth are counted on by their peers while in treatment and help youth see the positive role they play in each other's treatment and success. For example, staff can point out to youth how helpful it is when they support a peer through a difficult moment.
- **Work with youth to assess how existing social connections impact safety and stability and support them in expanding social networks.** Youth are particularly sensitive to isolation and derive a sense of stability from belonging to peer groups, whether the peer groups are positive or negative. A youth's being part of peer networks engaged in high-risk or illegal behavior increases the risk for recidivism and decreases mental health stability, but social isolation can have the same effects. Juvenile justice staff therefore can work with youth to assess their existing peer networks and explore with them how their social connections affect their safety and stability, and also, if necessary, help them expand their social networks.

The Five Domains of Wellbeing Research and Implications: SAFETY

Safety for Youth and Youth Involved in the Juvenile Justice System

Adolescence, the developmental phase that occurs between the ages of 11 and 21, is a time of increasing independence and autonomy. During this period adolescents are establishing their own value systems and critical thinking skills, and determining where they fit in, in comparison to their peers.³³ Youth are exploring what and who feels safe to them and are experimenting and trying new experiences and activities, some of which may involve risk, to gain more independence and self-identity.

For youth who live in environments where unsafe conditions are more the norm than the exception, the range and level of risk taking behaviors and experimentation may be heightened.

Here we review special considerations when thinking about safety in the lives of youth in general and juvenile justice-involved youth in particular.

Youth and Safety

- The experience of safety (or the lack of it) is complex and is dependent on a number of interrelated factors including the activities youth participate in, the relationships they have, the environment in which they live and their individual perception and feelings of safety.³⁴
- Youth function primarily in three environments—home, school and their community between home and school. Experiencing feelings of safety in all three of these environments is important; however, a lack of safety in one may be partially ameliorated by a strong sense of safety in another. Youth who don't feel safe in any of these environments will try to minimize tradeoffs of being in the unsafe environment by creating situations where they do feel safe.³⁵
- Increasing autonomy leads adolescents to spend more time outside of the home independent of close parental or adult supervision. This may result in increased exposure to both positive and negative interactions and experiences in their neighborhoods and communities.³⁶
- Trying out new roles and establishing connections can result in number of safety tradeoffs. Concerns about being accepted make youth all the more susceptible to peer influence and they weigh peer perception more heavily in decision-making. Youth may engage in behaviors that feel unsafe to them or are perceived as unsafe by parents and other adults (e.g., experimentation with drugs, alcohol and sex) in order to fit in with peer groups or to figure out their own limits.^{37,38,39,40}
- As youths' identities develop, their "authentic self" begins to emerge. Youth who feel discriminated against because of their race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender, religious affiliation, size or any other identity group may experience a deep sense of self-doubt and social isolation. Youth may feel they have to weigh the tradeoffs of either being with a group or being alone as their "authentic self."⁴¹
- It is a common misperception that youth engage in high-risk behaviors because they feel invulnerable. Actually, youth living in high-risk contexts (i.e., high crime and poverty) may feel,

³³ Steinberg, 55-59.

³⁴ Margolin, Gayla and Elana B. Gordis. "The Effects of Family and Community Violence on Children." *Annual Review of Psychology* 51, (2000). 445-479.

³⁵ Mateu-Gelabert, Pedro. *School Violence: The Bi-Directional Conflict Flow between Neighborhood and School*. New York: Vera Institute of Justice, 2000.

³⁶ Stein, Bradley, Lisa H. Jaycox, Sheryl Kataoka, Hilary J. Rhodes, and Katherine D. Vestal. "Prevalence of Child and Adolescent Exposure to Community Violence." *Clinical Child and Family Psychology Review* 6, no. 4, (2003). 247-264.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Proctor, et al., 583-630.

⁴¹ Beyer, 3-23.

“what does it matter?” because they often believe that they will die prematurely. A youth’s perceived risk of death is predictive of fight-related injury, arrest and HIV/AIDS diagnosis.^{42,43}

Juvenile Justice-Involved Youth and Safety

- Race, ethnicity, and concentrated disadvantage play a significant role in juvenile justice. Youth belonging to non-dominant identity groups (e.g., African American, Latino, LGBTQ) and those who live in neighborhoods with high levels of concentrated disadvantage are disproportionately represented in the juvenile justice system and are more likely to be arrested and court-involved than youth from more affluent areas. In some systems, youth experience discrimination and racism which can further erode their sense of safety.^{44,45}
- Youth in the juvenile justice system experience disproportionate rates of violence within their communities, and youth living in communities with high rates of violence and other safety threats also face barriers to accessing relevant resources, even when those resources exist. Youth may feel judged or disrespected when accessing resources and services or may face direct threats to safety, rendering accessing those resources not worth it. This may help explain high levels of school absences among bullied youth and among youth in schools where there is a high gang presence.⁴⁶
- Over 90% of youth in the juvenile justice system have experienced some type of childhood trauma, including child maltreatment and witnessing domestic or community violence; and many are involved in child protective services. This rate, and the rate of PTSD among juvenile justice involved-youth, is dramatically higher than among non-system involved youth.^{47,48,49}
- Young women in the juvenile justice system experience disproportionate rates of dating violence. One study found that well over half of young women had experienced some form of violence at the hands of a partner.⁵⁰
- Many youth in the juvenile justice system are affiliated with gangs. Gang affiliation may give youth—particularly youth who do not feel safe elsewhere and who do not feel connected to other peers—a sense of safety and belonging. However, the tradeoff of being gang-affiliated often is witnessing violence or engaging in high-risk behaviors that can negatively affect safety.⁵¹
- Because the experience of safety is personal and individualized for everyone, youth involved in the juvenile justice system may engage in a variety of strategies and behaviors to increase their sense of safety (e.g., carrying a weapon) that make others feel unsafe. These behaviors are often considered risks for recidivism, rather than an attempt to assert a sense of safety.^{52,53}

⁴² Duke, Naomi N., Iris Borowsky, Sandra L. Pettingell, Carol L. Skay, and Barbara J. McMorris. “Adolescent Early Death Perception: Links to Behavioral and Life Outcomes in Young Adulthood.” *Journal of Pediatric Health Care* 25, no. 4, (2011). 224-234.

⁴³ Valadez-Meltzer, Adela, Thomas J. Silber, Arthur A. Meltzer, and Lawrence J. D’Angelo. “Will I Be Alive in 2005? Adolescent Level of Involvement in Risk Behaviors and Belief in Near-future Death.” *Pediatrics* 116, no. 1 (2005). 24-31.

⁴⁴ Rodriguez, Nancy. “Concentrated Disadvantage and the Incarceration of Youth Examining How Context Affects Juvenile Justice.” *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency* 50 (2011). 189-215.

⁴⁵ Holsinger, Kristi. “Youth in the Juvenile Justice System: Characteristics and Patterns of Involvement.” In *Juvenile Justice: Advancing Research, Policy, and Practice*, edited by Francine T. Sherman and Francine H. Jacobs, 24-43. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2011.

⁴⁶ Côté-Lussier, Carolyn and Caroline Fitzpatrick. “Feelings of Safety at School, Socioemotional Functioning, and Classroom Engagement.” *Journal of Adolescent Health* 58, no. 5 (2016). 543-550.

⁴⁷ Ford, Julian D. “Traumatic Victimization in Childhood and Persistent Problems with Oppositional-defiance.” *Journal of Trauma, Maltreatment, and Aggression* 11, (2002). 25-58.

⁴⁸ Braverman, Paula and Robert Morris. “The Health of Youth in the Juvenile Justice System.” In *Juvenile Justice: Advancing Research, Policy, and Practice*, edited by Francine T. Sherman and Francine H. Jacobs, 3-23. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2011.

⁴⁹ Sege, Robert D. and Vincent G. Licenziato. *Recognizing and Preventing Youth Violence: A Guide for Physicians and Other Health Care Professionals*. Waltham, MA: Massachusetts Medical Society, 2001.

⁵⁰ Buttar, Aulakh, Kristen Clements-Nolle, Joseph Haas, and Fritz Reese. “Dating Violence, Psychological Distress, and Attempted Suicide Among Female Adolescent in the Juvenile Justice System.” *Journal of Correctional Health Care* 19, no. 2 (2013). 101-112.

⁵¹ Morris, Robert E., Edward A. Harrison, George W. Knox, Edward Tromanhauser, Damon K. Marquis, and Lydia L. Watts. “Health Risk Behavioral Survey from 39 Juvenile Correctional Facilities in the United States.” *Journal of Adolescent Health* 17, no. 6 (1995). 334-344.

⁵² Proctor, et al., 583-630.

⁵³ Sealock and Manasse, 238-248.

- Due to a plethora of additional challenges and systemic oppressions (e.g., poverty, lack of access to education and other resources, chronic instability, prolonged exposure to unsafe conditions, community violence) youth involved in the juvenile justice system have higher rates of aggressive and antisocial behaviors, gang involvement, and thoughts of and attempts at self-harm and suicide, compared to non-system involved youth.^{54,55,56}

Implications for Juvenile Justice Systems and their Staff

- **Identify the safety strategies that youth have used to stay safe and validate the purpose of behavior.** Validate and discuss with youth how self-protective behaviors (e.g., aggressiveness, violence, isolating) have served a crucial function for them and may have increased their immediate sense of safety, and that giving up those behaviors may feel very unsafe. From this foundation and shared understanding, treatment can incorporate helping youth develop alternative coping mechanisms and safety strategies to mitigate the loss of old strategies and behaviors.
- **Provide an environment that feels safe to all youth.** Residential treatment should provide a safe and stable setting where youth can, with support, develop and practice life skills to allow for greater safety and independent living. Part of this requires recognizing that what feels safe to one youth may not feel safe to another, and working with youth to figure out how to increase their safety while not sacrificing or threatening others' safety. Youth who are the only one of a particular group in the residential setting may require additional support in feeling safe (see number three below).
- **Intentionally support youth to feel safe expressing core parts of themselves.** Youth have a variety of identities (e.g., race, culture, gender, LGBTQ and more) that are core to who they are, regardless of where they live or what program or service they are in. During treatment, explicitly engage with youth around their identities, and be intentional about creating an environment that is nonjudgmental and encourages and celebrates diversity. It is also important to work with youth to identify where they feel safe and unsafe being their authentic selves in community and to work on developing strategies to increase safety in an environment that may feel unsafe.
- **Provide safe opportunities to practice new social skills to build a sense of mastery around them.** Youth need to practice the skills that allow them to connect positively with others while being their authentic selves. Youth need opportunities to learn and practice positive social skills in contexts where they feel safe and not judged in order to mitigate the tradeoffs of trying something that might feel emotionally unsafe. Treatment can incorporate role play activities with staff and peers or other activities where youth can explore the connection between social skills and feeling safe.

⁵⁴ Morris, et al., 334-344.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Sege and Licenziato.

The Five Domains of Wellbeing Research and Implications:

STABILITY

Stability for Youth and Youth Involved in the Juvenile Justice System

Adolescence is characterized by a developmental process of determining individual value systems, critical thinking skills, and questioning what is “normal.”⁵⁷ Amidst all this change, a sense of stability provides a needed foundation for growth. Although testing limits may be part of many adolescents’ development, all youth benefit from regular routines, structures, and expectations that include clear, consistently applied, and proportional consequences, which youth can weigh as they consider the tradeoffs inherent in decision-making. It is important for adult caretakers to be transparent with youth about why particular rules, structures, and consequences exist. This information will help youth adapt positively and understand where they have some control over their lives. This understanding also contributes to an overall experience of predictability, which provides a protective buffer to deal with challenges and stressors and help ensure smaller problems don’t snowball into bigger problems or crises. For example, the stress of a parent losing their job and the family having to move to a new neighborhood where the rent is cheaper may be mitigated if a youth is still able to attend the same school or church or continue participating in the afterschool program at the local community center.

Many youth in the juvenile justice system have experienced ongoing family and community instability (e.g., changing family structure, poverty, emotional instability) and because they are not fully independent from their caretakers or public systems of care, seldom have a sense of control over their environment. When provided well, treatment can infuse a sense of stability by setting and sticking to regular routines with clear expectations that free youth from the stress of wondering whether tomorrow will be fundamentally different from today. It is important for youth in juvenile justice to experience this stability, and for the youth and their families to have help, whenever possible, translating that structure and stability when youth return to their homes and communities.

Here, we review special considerations when thinking about stability in the lives of youth in general and youth in the juvenile justice system in particular.

Youth and Stability

- Youth living in economically and relationally stable family environments have more positive outcomes (e.g., academic success, more constructive peer relationships, better mental health) than those living in unstable environments.⁵⁸
- Youth that have well developed coping skills and resiliency (often supported through high but reasonable expectations from adults and caring relationships with adults) are better able to maintain stability including better mental health, even when experiencing adverse or destabilizing events. The accumulation of such events (e.g., parental separation, poverty, family mental illness) has been linked to a number of long-term negative health outcomes. However, a youth’s ability to cope with these events may be better indicator of positive health outcomes than the experience of adversity.^{59,60}

⁵⁷ Steinberg, 55-59.

⁵⁸ Paradis, Angela D., Rose M. Giaconia, Helen Z. Reinherz, William R. Beardslee, Kirsten M. Ward, and Garrett M. Fitzmaurice. “Adolescent Family Factors Promoting Healthy Adult Functioning: A Longitudinal Community Study.” *Child and Adolescent Mental Health* 16, no. 1 (2011). 30-37.

⁵⁹ Felitti, Vincent J., Robert F. Anda, Dale Nordenberg, David F. Williamson, Alison M. Spitz, Valerie Edwards, Mary P. Koss, and James S. Marks. “Relationship of Childhood Abuse and Household Dysfunction to Many of the Leading Causes of Death in Adults: The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study.” *American Journal of Preventive Medicine* 14, no. 4 (1998). 245-258.

⁶⁰ Hanson, Thomas L. and Jin-Oh Kim. (2007). *Measuring Resilience and Youth Development: The Psychometric Properties of the Healthy Kids Survey*. (Issues & Answers Report, REL 2007-No. 034). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Regional Educational Laboratory West.

- Particular groups of youth (e.g., those identifying with and living in marginalized and oppressed groups and communities) may be at greater risk for exposure to unstable environments. Exposure to these environments is linked to a variety of challenges include anxiety, lower academic achievement, delinquency, depression, negative coping skills, and social isolation. In turn, social isolation is linked to youths' increased psychological instability and drug/alcohol use, perpetuating a cycle of instability.^{61,62,63,64}

Juvenile Justice-Involved Youth and Stability

- Youth in the juvenile justice system often face instability in a number of contexts: within themselves, in their homes, in their communities, and in their relationships with others. These youth also experience disproportionate rates of a number of physical and mental health challenges and use drugs and alcohol at higher rates than non-system involved youth, all of which cause further and sometimes chronic instability in their lives. This instability in multiple contexts adversely affects youth's functioning, or ability to adapt (resiliency). However, resiliency may be built through meeting youth's needs for love and belonging, respect, identity, power and meaning.^{65,66,67,68,69,70}
- Youth in the juvenile justice system are more likely to grow up in low-income, single-parent homes. In order to meet economic needs, a parent (usually a mother) may need to take on employment that limits the predictability in the household and her ability to effectively monitor her adolescent children.⁷¹
- Economic instability may hinder parental or caretaker involvement in youth's residential treatment. The caretaker may not have the necessary funds to visit youth, or may have a stringent or ever-changing work schedule that prohibits visitation or other consistent involvement.⁷²

Implications for Juvenile Justice Systems and their Staff

- **Identify the strategies that youth have used to create a sense of stability and validate the purpose of behavior.** Juvenile justice staff and youth need to work together to identify how youth created stability in their life and coped with a lack of stability prior to involvement in the juvenile justice system, as well as new skills and anchors that have been developed during treatment. Validate the purpose behind the range of behaviors and strategies aimed at increasing stability, and work together to ensure the positive, helpful ones are carried forth beyond treatment.
- **Create predictability and familiarity during treatment. Youth coming into treatment will experience a challenge to stability due to the unfamiliar environment.** Preparing youth for the initial feeling of instability and identifying how ways youth create stability can be brought

⁶¹ Gasper, Joseph, Stephanie DeLuca, and Angela Estacion. "Coming and Going: Explaining the Effects of Residential and School Mobility on Adolescent Delinquency." *Social Science Research* 39, (2010). 459-476.

⁶² Oishi, Shigehiro and Ulrich Schimmack. "Residential Mobility, Well-being, and Mortality." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 98, no. 6 (2010). 980-994.

⁶³ Bennett, M. Daniel and David Bernard Miller. "An Exploratory Study of the Urban Hassles Index: A Contextually Relevant Measure of Chronic Multidimensional Urban Stressors." *Research on Social Work Practice* 16, (2006). 305-314.

⁶⁴ Margolin and Gordis, 445-479.

⁶⁵ Constantine, Norman A., Bonnie Benard, and Marycruz Diaz. "Measuring Protective Factors and Resilience Traits in Youth: The Healthy Kids Resilience Assessment." Seventh Annual Meeting of the Society for Prevention Research, New Orleans, LA, June 1999.

⁶⁶ Golzari, Mana, Stephen J. Hunt, and Arash Anoshiravani. "The Health Status of Youth in Juvenile Detention Facilities." *Journal of Adolescent Health* 38, (2006). 776-782.

⁶⁷ The Annie E. Casey Foundation. *No Place for Kids: The Case of Reducing Juvenile Incarceration*. Baltimore, MD, 2011.

⁶⁸ Holsinger, 24-34.

⁶⁹ Kennedy, Angie C., Debrenna LaFa Agbenyiga, Natalie Kasiborski, and Jessica Gladden. "Risk Chains over the Life Course Among Homeless Urban Adolescent Mothers: Altering Their Trajectories through Formal Support." *Children and Youth Services Review* 32, (2010). 1740-1749.

⁷⁰ Masten, Ann S. and Dante Cicchetti. "Developmental Cascades." *Development and Psychopathology* 22, (2010). 491-495.

⁷¹ Rodriguez, 189-215.

⁷² Agudelo, Sandra V. *The Impact of Family Visitation on Incarcerated Youth's Behavior and School Performance: Findings from the Families as Partners Project*. Vera Institute of Justice, Family Justice Program, 2013.

into treatment (e.g., allowing youth to bring a special blanket or piece of clothing from home, or putting in place a practice for the youth to say goodnight to the group if the youth has a routine of saying goodnight to family members at home) may alleviate the tradeoffs.

- **Support youth in maintaining connections and routines during transition.** Establish continuity of care by connecting youth to a variety of supports—formal treatment and services and informal resources and connections—while they are still in residential treatment and prior to their return to their home community. This will help minimize the tradeoffs to stability that inevitably happen when the routines and predictability of residential care ends.
- **Support family stability so that small problems don't snowball into big ones.** Talk to youth not only about their own strategies for increasing stability, but also how their family and caretakers create anchors and predictability. Bring in the family or caretakers to discuss which of these strategies are most helpful and provide support for continuity. For example, if it's important to the family's stability that they eat dinner one night a week together, ensure the youth does not have post-treatment meetings or other responsibilities that will interfere with this family routine.
- **Support new skills and anchors for stability.** For youth in the juvenile justice system, intrapersonal, interpersonal, and environmental instability are common. Involvement with the juvenile justice system will not erase or mitigate all the factors that contribute to instability, and yet treatment usually focuses on minimizing symptoms that may be the result of instability, rather than on developing new ways of increasing stability and coping. Help youth develop new strategies for experiencing predictability as protective buffers to returning to an environment that will likely still be characterized by significant instability.
- **Highlight skills used by peers to alleviate the stress of instability.** Working together in groups and an emphasis on building connections with each other in the group also create opportunities for youth to experience how emotional and material support gained through peer connections can alleviate the stress of instability in other parts of their lives. Youth can learn that their peers experience similar feelings when faced with instability, and they can learn from and teach peers new ways to cope with these emotions.

The Five Domains of Wellbeing Research and Implications: MASTERY

Mastery for Youth and Youth Involved in the Juvenile Justice System

During adolescence, youth develop a greater sense of self and the ability to weigh possibilities and facts in decision-making.⁷³ Their growing autonomy leads them to try new behaviors and to exert a level of choice or control they did not experience at a younger age. While having new experiences, youth explore a variety of roles and take on a number of new responsibilities (e.g., academics, employment, intimate relationships) that may or may not ultimately enable a sense of mastery in different areas of their life.

What is important to a sense of mastery is that progress or achievement requires some effort (does not come too easily) and that there is some correlation felt between the efforts exerted and the outcomes achieved. The experience of mastery does not come from mastering a skill but instead from the process of trying to improve or make progress in something and seeing efforts paying off. Experiencing both failures and successes allows people to grow and identify their strengths as well as their priorities for where they want to stretch themselves, an especially important experience as youth transition into adulthood.

Mastery is connected to a number of positive outcomes among youth. Mastery developed during adolescence builds resiliency, and buffers the impact of adversity, even later in life. In addition, when youth experience mastery, they may be more motivated or driven to challenge themselves in a skill or to explore developing mastery in other areas.

Here, we review special considerations when thinking about mastery in the lives of youth in general and youth in the juvenile justice system in particular.

Youth and Mastery

- Autonomy, role exploration and having new experiences—normal developmental processes for adolescents—are the context for developing mastery. Youth seek out all types of opportunities to learn and grow and may engage in a range of behaviors, some risky or unsafe, to develop feelings of mastery; youth with more developmental assets tend to have more opportunities for experiencing mastery through engaging in low-risk activities.^{74,75,76}
- Opportunities to experience success and achievement are gained through participation in activities that enable skill development and connectedness.⁷⁷
- Mastery begets mastery. Being able to identify individual goals, make a plan to achieve those goals, and achieving those goals are linked to positive outlook and life satisfaction among youth, as well as to higher grades. A youth who experiences these successes is more likely to engage in structured extracurricular activities that provide additional opportunities for experiencing mastery.^{78,79}

⁷³ Steinberg, 55-59.

⁷⁴ Dumas, Tara M., Wendy E. Ellis, and David A. Wolfe. "Identity Development as a Buffer of Adolescent Risk Behaviors in the Context of Peer Group Pressure and Control." *Journal of Adolescence* 35, no. 4 (2012). 917-927.

⁷⁵ Willoughby, Tina, Heather Chalmers, Michael A. Busseri, Sandra Bosacki, Diane Dupont, Zopito Marini, Linda Rose-Krasnor, Stan Sadava, Anthony Ward, and Vera Woloshyn. "Adolescent Non-involvement in Multiple Risk Behaviors: An Indicator of Successful Development?" *Applied Development Science* 11, no. 2 (2007). 89-103.

⁷⁶ Fuller, Bruce, Luke Dauter, Adrienne Hosek, Greta Kirschenbaum, Deborah McKoy, Jessica Rigby, and Jeffrey M. Vincent. "Building Schools, Rethinking Quality? Early Lessons from Los Angeles." *Journal of Educational Administration* 47, no. 3 (2009). 336-349.

⁷⁷ Scales, Peter C., Peter L. Benson, Nancy Leffert, and Dale A. Blyth. "Contribution of Developmental Assets to the Prediction of Thriving Among Adolescents." *Applied Developmental Science* 4, no. 1 (2000). 27-46.

⁷⁸ Napolitano, Christopher M., Edmond P. Bowers, Steinunn Gestsdottir, Miriam K. Depping, Alexander von Eye, Paul A. Chase, Jacqueline V. Lerner. "The Role of Parenting and Goal Selection in Positive Youth Development: A Person-centered Approach." *Journal of Adolescence* 34, no. 6 (2011). 1137-1149.

⁷⁹ Proctor, Linley, and Maltby, 583-630.

- Contributing to society or civic engagement is a key component of positive youth development. Youth in high-risk environments may have lower rates of civic engagement than other youth, but are often involved in informal community activities (e.g., language translation, mentoring children) that are not captured in the formal definition of civic engagement. These activities are contributions that youth, including youth in the juvenile justice system, make on a regular basis to their families and communities.⁸⁰
- A sense of mastery (i.e., having sufficient confidence that efforts and skills will result in desired outcomes or progress towards desired outcomes) around relational skills, such as conflict negotiation, is critical to develop during adolescence as the foundation for increasing and maintaining social connectedness. Youth learn these skills by assessing and internalizing experiences and integrating feedback they receive from others.⁸¹

Juvenile Justice-Involved Youth and Mastery

- A number of factors contribute to opportunities, or lack thereof, to experience mastery among youth. Youth involved in the juvenile justice systems experience higher rates of trauma, poverty, various forms of chronic instability, familial and community violence, physical and learning disabilities, and physical and mental health challenges compared to non-system involved youth. Each of these factors can significantly limit system-involved youths' opportunity and ability to experience mastery. Less access to resources and new experiences (e.g., traveling, music lessons, theatre) means fewer opportunities to try and hone new skills. Experiences of trauma and chronic stress interfere with cognitive abilities to learn, as well as the coping skills needed to keep trying even when the desired outcome does not come easily or quickly. Youth may use strategies (e.g., avoidance, drug use) to reduce stress in one area of life that increase other stressors or that further impede the motivation and ability to experience mastery. Youth that have been traumatized are more likely to act aggressively or violently toward others. Being able to protect themselves from perceived threats is a way some youth experience mastery, but this trauma response gets in the way of developing mastery in other parts of life, such as connecting socially with peers or achieving academic goals.^{82,83,84,85,86}
- Youth who have been exposed to high rates of crime and violence often report feeling hopeless and do not expect to live long lives. This outlook can interfere with setting and pursuing medium and long-term goals, and inhibit youth from pushing themselves to achieve life outcomes that may contribute to feelings of mastery (e.g., graduating from high school, staying sober).⁸⁷

Implications for Juvenile Justice Systems and their Staff

- **Identify ways youth have experienced mastery and validate the purpose of behavior.** Juvenile justice staff and youth need to work together to identify how and where youth experienced feelings of mastery prior to involvement in the juvenile justice system. These experiences could be found in any or all of the Five Domains of Wellbeing and come from both positive and risky

⁸⁰ Stepick, Alex, Carol Dutton Stepick, and Yves Labissiere. "South Florida's Immigrant Youth and Civic Engagement: Major Engagement, Minor Differences." *Applied Developmental Science* 12, no. 2 (2008). 57-65.

⁸¹ Proctor, et al., 583-630.

⁸² Connor-Smith, Jennifer K., Bruce E. Compas, Martha E. Wadsworth, Alexandra Harding Thomsen, and Heidi Saltzman. "Responses to Stress in Adolescence: Measurement of Coping and Involuntary Stress Responses." *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 68, no. 6 (2000). 976-992.

⁸³ Sealock and Manasse, 238-248.

⁸⁴ Farver, Jo Ann M., Lucia X. Natera, and Dominick L. Frosch. "Effects of Community Violence on Inner-city Preschoolers and Their Families." *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology* 20, no. 1 (1999). 143-158.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Valadez-Meltzer, et al., 24-31.

behaviors and activities. For example, some youth may experience mastery stealing food so their family can eat; others from being the best basketball player in the neighborhood. Validate the purpose behind the range of behaviors and strategies aimed at experiencing mastery, and work together to ensure the positive, helpful ones are carried forth beyond treatment and the high-risk ones are replaced with new ways of feeling mastery, through exploration of strengths (e.g., things youth feel they do well), interests and priorities.

- **Support youth in developing a sense of mastery around areas of interest.** Once strengths and areas of interest have been identified, provide opportunities for youth to engage in activities and experiences where they can get a sense of mastery. Group activities are also important, to allow youth to practice skills while connecting with others. Experiencing mastery within a group context provides youth the opportunity to showcase abilities and skills while helping them understand that being the best at something is not always the pathway to mastery. This context also allows youth to share frustrations about the process and get social support for persevering.
- **Provide youth with control and choice whenever possible.** Supporting mastery includes helping youth feel that they have control and influence over their lives. When possible, provide youth with choice in either what gets done or how something gets done. These opportunities for developing mastery may collectively enable youth to feel that they can make changes in other parts of their lives.
- **Pay attention to how changes in family roles may challenge a youth's sense of mastery.** Youth whose families depend on them to serve adult functions (e.g., to make sure there is food in the house) may derive a sense of mastery from providing this support. Juvenile justice staff should discuss with them how being counted on can have a positive impact on the way they view themselves, and on the functioning of the family, while also recognizing the tradeoffs of youth filling in for adults. If family treatment involves facilitating changes in family dynamics to encourage more parental responsibility and lessen youths' adult responsibilities within their families, juvenile justice staff should be prepared to mitigate the tradeoffs with youth by helping them to find other areas of mastery and/or other outlets for these skills.
- **Support the development of a sense of mastery around social and emotional skills.** Recognize social and emotional skills as an area in which youth may need support to develop a sense of mastery. Mastery in this area is important to mental health and relationship stability, which can ultimately positively impact many other realms, such as employment. Juvenile justice staff can provide youth significant opportunities to learn and improve intrapersonal skills (e.g., self-grounding, identifying and verbalizing emotions, identifying triggers, impulse control) and interpersonal skills (e.g., conflict negotiation, emotional attunement). Youths' sense of mastery around these skills can assist in furthering their sense of mastery in other areas.

The Five Domains of Wellbeing Research and Implications: MEANINGFUL ACCESS TO RELEVANT RESOURCES

Meaningful Access to Relevant Resources for Youth and Youth Involved in the Juvenile Justice System

During adolescence, youth are beginning to make their own choices about what resources they want and need, and how they get those needs met. They are developing a greater sense of self and the ability to weigh possibilities and facts that might affect their choices.⁸⁸ Yet youth are not fully independent and often have to rely on their adult caretakers for such things as information, permission, financial assistance, transportation, etcetera.

Relevant resources are not the same thing as formal or professionalized services. While all youth (and all people) need resources that are relevant to them as individuals, not every person needs services to get those resources. However, services can be a key pathway to resources, especially for youth experiencing poverty, instability, and marginalization.

Meaningful access means more than a resource exists or is simply available; it means that accessing that resource does not constitute emotional or physical harm or undue burden. Yet, youth and their adult caretakers may have different perspectives on whether or not a youth has meaningful access to a given resource. In circumstances where resources are best accessed through services (which is not always the case—not everyone needs services to get resources), adults may want youth to partake in certain services that give them access to resources and to disregard any stigma that peers attach to the given service. However, such stigma carries particular weight in adolescent development and thus in weighing tradeoffs. Because adolescents are particularly dependent on social cues to determine what is acceptable to their peer groups, they may not access services (e.g., counseling) or resources (e.g., clothing that is “uncool”) that are not readily accepted by their peers. At the same time, peers who minimize potential tradeoffs by signalling that a youth will not be socially isolated for participating in a service or for accessing a resource may help increase meaningful access.

Here, we review special considerations when thinking about meaningful access in the lives of youth in general and youth in the juvenile justice system in particular.

Youth and Meaningful Access to Relevant Resources

- Meaningful access to relevant resources begets meaningful access to relevant resources. And a number of factors contribute to whether youth have meaningful access, or not, to relevant resources. Youth who live in communities with low violence, in families with higher incomes, and who belong to dominant identity groups (e.g., U.S. born; White) have more access to relevant resources and to pathways to resources such as social capital and money. Communities that experience higher rates of poverty, violence, and chronic instability often have fewer consistent access points for resources, such as medical care and education. Families that move frequently often experience disruptions to access, particularly for resources that require documentation or have eligibility and application requirements. While schools are physically present in almost all communities, lack of material resources (e.g., books, computers, transportation, appropriate clothing); threats to safety (e.g., bullying); and social challenges (e.g., isolation, learning disabilities) can all make access to those schools not meaningful.^{89,90,91}
- Parents and adult caretakers directly and indirectly influence youths’ meaningful access. Parents or other adult caretakers continue to be gatekeepers to a number of material resources and services. Without adult consent or financial assistance, youth may not be able to access resources

⁸⁸ Steinberg, 55-59.

⁸⁹ Fuller, et al., 336-349.

⁹⁰ Oishi and Schimmack, 980-994.

⁹¹ Voight, Adam, Marybeth Shinn, and Maury Nation. “The Longitudinal Effects of Residential Mobility on the Academic Achievement of Urban Elementary and Middle School Students.” *Educational Researcher* 41, no. 9 (2012). 385-392.

ranging from healthcare to transportation to education. Youth may need to negotiate with caretakers to increase meaningful access to resources, particularly if the adult’s ideas about what a youth needs conflict with the youth’s own perceived needs. Parents also indirectly influence access. For example, if youth witness their parents having a difficult time accessing relevant resources, they will feel those resources are also inaccessible to them.^{92,93,94,95,96}

- Some youth may serve as gateways to resources for their families. For example, U.S. born, bilingual children of monolingual (not English) immigrant parents may be counted on to provide cultural and linguistic interpretation in a variety of contexts. Providers’ perceptions of and attitudes toward adolescents (e.g., condescension or judgment) may impact the family’s access to resources and services.^{97,98}
- A heightened need to belong can influence the way youth weigh tradeoffs in choosing what and how to access resources. Services are often a pathway to meaningful access (e.g., the emergency room is an access point for medical attention), and youth are more likely to engage in services or access resources if those services have been vetted and deemed “acceptable” by their peers, and in turn, are more likely to avoid services that have been rejected by their peers.^{99,100}

Juvenile Justice-Involved Youth and Meaningful Access

- Youth involved in the juvenile justice system experience higher rates of trauma, poverty, various forms of chronic instability, and familial and community violence compared to non-system involved youth. Each of these factors can significantly limit system-involved youths’ meaningful access to relevant resources. Financial and social capital are key pathways to relevant resources—money can buy food and gas for the car; powerful connections can open doors to career-ladder employment. Youth exposed to high rates of community violence have lower rates of school attendance. Youth who have experienced trauma are more likely to act aggressively or even violently toward others and have trouble staying calm in challenging situations. This may result in being labeled as “problematic” and can mean they are barred from or asked to leave services or activities that are pathways to resources. Societal norms about who deserves what, as well as systemic biases, can negatively impact meaningful access. Adolescent mothers often have difficulty accessing crucial prenatal care because they feel judged by providers and staff, making it “not worth it” to access prenatal care.^{101,102,103,104,105}

⁹² de Jonge, Ank. “Support for Teenage Mothers: A Qualitative Study into the Views of Women About the Support They Received As Teenage Mothers.” *Journal of Advanced Nursing* 36, no. 1 (2001). 49-57.

⁹³ Stewart, Sunita M., Alex Simmons, and Ehsan Habibpour. “Treatment of Culturally Diverse Children and Adolescents with Depression.” *Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychopharmacology* 22, no. 1 (2012). 72-79.

⁹⁴ Jacobs, Francine, Rachel Oliveri, Jessica Greenstone, and Claudia Miranda-Julian. *Massachusetts Health Passport Project Evaluation Final Report*. Medford, MA: Tufts University, 2009.

⁹⁵ Logan, Diedre E. and Cheryl A. King. “Parental Facilitation of Adolescent Mental Health Service Utilization: A Conceptual and Empirical Review.” *Clinical Psychology: Science and Practice* 8, no. 3 (2001). 319-333.

⁹⁶ Norweeta G. Milburn, Ronald M. Andersen, Sharone Trifskin, and Michael A. Rodríguez. “Emotional Distress and Mental Health Service use Among Urban Homeless Adolescents.” *The Journal of Behavioral Health Services & Research* 33, no. 4 (2006). 381-393.

⁹⁷ Green, Judith, Caroline Free, Vanita Bhavnani, and Tony Newman. “Translators and Mediators: Bilingual Young People’s Accounts of Their Interpreting Work in Health Care.” *Social Science & Medicine* 60, no. 9 (2005). 2097-2110.

⁹⁸ Stepick, Stepick, and Labissiere, 57-65.

⁹⁹ Kort-Butler, Lisa A. and Kimberly A. Tyler. “A Cluster Analysis of Service Utilization and Incarceration Among Homeless Youth.” *Social Science Research* 41, no. 3 (2012). 612-623.

¹⁰⁰ Stewart, Simmons, and Habibpour, 72-79.

¹⁰¹ de Jonge, 49-57.

¹⁰² Bowen, Natasha K. and Gary L. Bowen. “Effects of Crime and Violence in Neighborhoods and Schools on the School Behavior and Performance of Adolescents.” *Journal of Adolescent Research* 14, no. 3 (1999). 319-342.

¹⁰³ Proctor, Linley, and Maltby, 583-630.

¹⁰⁴ Bennett and Miller, 305-314.

¹⁰⁵ Margolin and Gordis, 445-479.

- Youth involved in the juvenile justice system are three times more likely than non-system involved youth to belong in a gang. Gangs are often very effective and efficient pathways to all Five Domains of Wellbeing; for example, provides safety from rival gang members and meaningful access to transportation.¹⁰⁶
- Youth involved in the juvenile justice system have higher rates of involvement with other systems, such as child welfare, than other youth. Youth aging out of foster care often lack life skills such as financial knowledge, understanding how to secure and maintain housing, and/or how to navigate employment, all of which negatively impacts meaningful access and the ability to successfully take on adult responsibilities.^{107,108}
- Youth who are homeless report a number of barriers to obtaining resources, such as negative experiences with providers, fear that they will be reported to the police or child protective services, and being too young to consent to care. As a result, homeless youth often increase their access to resources by engaging in high-risk or illegal behavior.^{109,110}

Implications for Juvenile Justice Systems and their Staff

- **Support family wellbeing through increasing their meaningful access to relevant resources.** Talk to not just youth but their caretakers and family members to assess how the family or household is are meeting their basic needs for relevant resources (e.g., housing, food, healthcare, transportation, clothing, laundry facilities) and provide resources directly or referrals to services that can increase access, as needed. Increasing a family's meaningful access to relevant resources will in turn increase stability and the likelihood that the youth's treatment will be successful over time.
- **Work with youth to identify challenges to meaningful access to relevant resources.** Assist youth in identifying the relevant resources they need and in determining whether they have meaningful access to these resources. For example, a youth may want to go back to school, and there is a school in the community, but teacher attitudes towards juvenile justice system-involved youth are highly negative, so the youth may not have meaningful access. Additionally, discrimination or micro-aggressions related to a youth's race or other identity (e.g., a youth of color being followed in a store by a security officer) may have a substantial impact on meaningful access. As part of this assessment, juvenile justice systems should work with youth to determine how safe and connected they feel to the people and systems necessary for access to resources, both within the juvenile justice system and within their communities. If barriers such as threats to physical or emotional safety arise, juvenile justice staff and youth can work together to determine how to minimize these tradeoffs, for example between safety and meaningful access.
- **Support youth in developing skills to meaningfully access relevant resources.** It is important that juvenile justice staff recognize their role in actively connecting youth with resources, beyond providing their caretakers or them with information or referrals. Youth may also need to develop the skills to access resources (e.g., how to make a phone call to inquire about the availability of a job opening) which in turn may also provide them with an opportunity to experience mastery. Juvenile justice staff can model and also have youth practice the skills necessary to increase meaningful access; for example, youth, their peers, and juvenile justice staff can set up mock appointments,

¹⁰⁶ Voisin, Dexter R., Jessica M. Sales, Jun Sung Hong, Jerrod M. Jackson, Eva S. Rose, E., and Ralph J. DiClemente. "Social Context and Problem Factors Among Youth with Juvenile Justice Involvement Histories." *Behavioral Medicine* 5, (2015). 1-8.

¹⁰⁷ Collins, Mary E., Renee Spencer, and Rolanda Ward. "Supporting Youth in the Transition from Foster Care: Formal and Informal Connections." *Child Welfare* 89, no. 1 (2010). 125-143.

¹⁰⁸ Cusick, Gretchen Ruth, Judy R. Havlicek, and Mark E. Courtney. "Risk for Arrest: The Role of Social Bonds in Protecting Foster Youth Making the Transition to Adulthood." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 82, no. 1 (2012). 19-31.

¹⁰⁹ Kort-Butler and Tyler, 612-623.

¹¹⁰ Tyler, Kimberly A., Sarah L. Akinyemi, and Lisa A. Kort-Butler. "Correlates of Service Utilization Among Homeless Youth." *Children and Youth Services Review* 34, no. 7 (2012). 1344-1350.

practice interacting with service providers, and practice conversational skills and information seeking with individuals of various ages. This safe environment can encourage youth to learn from each other as they hone their skills. Juvenile justice system treatment can also provide youth the opportunity to learn the skills necessary to become informed (and safe) consumers, practicing developing and asking appropriate and necessary questions, and doing research online.

- **Help increase youth and families' meaningful access prior to leaving treatment.** In order to extend the therapeutic benefits of treatment, youth and families should be meaningfully connected with relevant resources within their communities even while the youth is still in treatment. Waiting until the youth is trying to reintegrate introduces too many new situations and dynamics at once; continuity is critical and increases stability. Once needed relevant resources have been identified, juvenile justice staff can begin to work with key contacts to help establish a network of informal and formal support systems. Staff can also help repair relationships that may be barriers to meaningful access. A youth's prior actions may have compromised relationships and meaningful access to resources; for example, a past instance of bringing a knife to school may mean the administration of that school doesn't want that youth in attendance. Efforts during treatment to repair these relationships as appropriate, and increasing access to resources that will be needed upon transition, will be highly effective in ensuring positive changes are sustainable over time.
- **Connect youth and families with individuals rather than programs.** Relationships and social capital dramatically increase meaningful access. Whenever possible, it is important to connect a youth (or family member) to a specific person at a resource point, agency or program, rather than simply referring a youth (or family) to a program or service.

This collection of fact sheets on the Five Domains of Wellbeing in the context of juvenile justice was created by the Full Frame Initiative in partnership with Missouri Division of Youth Services (<http://dss.mo.gov/dys/index.htm>) which has integrated wellbeing into their treatment and work with youth and families.

We hope you find this resource helpful. If you would like to use it for your own work, or if you have questions or comments about the Five Domains of Wellbeing, please contact the Full Frame Initiative: learn-more@fullframeinitiative.org or (413) 773-3400.

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