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Council of Juvenile Justice Administrators

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Mission

To connect, develop and strengthen youth corrections leaders to maximize their capacities to implement and sustain reforms in their systems that will improve outcomes for youth, families and communities.

Vision

“We believe every youth should leave a correctional program in a better place than when he or she came in.”

Core Values

- Continuous Learning
- Collaboration
- Rehabilitation
- Parental Engagement
- Supportive Communities
- Diversity

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Code of Practice for Harm and Violence Prevention and Comprehensive Intervention Strategies for Juvenile Justice Systems

In 2007, 86,814 youth were committed to short-term or long-term secure residential facilities across the United States. That number decreased to 43,580 in 2017¹. As a result, more youth are being served in communities and there is an increased concentration of higher need and higher risk youth in secure residential facilities. Young people entering the juvenile justice systems' secure facilities have arrived with multiple challenges, including mental health issues, exposure to traumatic events, substance use, sexually reactive behaviors, and developmental disabilities. Deep-end, secure Juvenile justice system facilities have become the last resort for localities that lack the resources and/or services to meet the needs of these youth in a community-based setting.

Juvenile justice programs have been making great strides and are making significant system changes to accommodate and treat this higher needs and higher risk population of youth. These efforts have resulted in changes in institutional culture to ensure safety and consistency of operations with this more challenging population. As more juvenile justice youth are diverted from secure treatment facilities to community based education and non-secure community based programs, the following code of practice and standards are recommended and have proven effective in these venues as well.

CJJA recognizes that there are no national standards for crisis intervention, violence and harm prevention or any type of universal behavior response training. Therefore, the Council of Juvenile Justice Administrators and partner organizations developed a Code of Practice to cultivate best practices and the shared idea of least restrictive and most appropriate intervention strategies that focus on reducing the use of all forms of restraint including physical, mechanical and chemical in addition to reducing or eliminating the need for the use of isolation as a safety response technique.

POSITION STATEMENT

The Council of Juvenile Justice Administrators (CJJA) strongly supports the position that the following code of practices and standards be established to govern and guide the development of policies, procedures, and training programs for all behavior response intervention practices, throughout the continuum of care from education and community-based programs to both secure and non-secure juvenile justice residential facilities:

Code of Practice

- An atmosphere and culture of safety and care can be created by all juvenile justice service organizations;
- Every effort should be made to structure environments and provide behavioral supports for youth, with a positive orientation to prevent violence or behaviors posing risk, and thus prevent the need for restrictive interventions;
- The consistent delivery of organized, trauma informed programs that are gender and culturally knowledgeable, will enhance safety;
- Developing positive relationships between staff and residents enhances safety;
- Behavior presenting risk of harm to the physical and emotional safety of individuals in care, as well as their service providers can be minimized and/or prevented when responded to with humane and relationship enhancing methods;
- Service organizations must actively pursue the reduction of the use of restrictive interventions through a variety of training and skill development programs that focus on awareness, early intervention and de-escalation skills/techniques;
- When restrictive interventions are employed, they should only be used to prevent an imminent risk of injury to someone and be discontinued when that risk is diminished, and safety is established;
- When restrictive interventions are necessary, they should be done in the least restrictive manner possible that can address the presenting dangerous behavior;
- When restrictive interventions are necessary, data and debriefing regarding these incidents need the inclusion of restorative practices and focus on preventing their reoccurrence;
- Service organizations are obligated to ensure that their staff possess competence in prevention and intervention techniques to address behavior that is dangerous, violent and/or causing harm to self or others;
- Service organizations must provide staff training and supervision that meets all required legal, ethical and regulatory standards and is youth oriented in its development and application;
- Service organizations must provide on-going and recurring training to ensure staff safety and competence that includes debriefing for growth, learning and maintaining wellness;
- Crisis intervention strategies that meet the standards outlined in this code of practice will allow youth and staff to remain safe when there is a risk of serious harm, thus allowing for therapeutic programs and services for youth in our care to continue in safety, with integrity and dignity.

¹¹ Sickmund, M., Sladky, T.J., Kang, W., & Puzanchera, C. (2019) "Easy Access to the Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement." Available: <https://www.ojjdp/ojstatbb/ezacjrp/>