

Supporting Effective Transitions for Ontario Youth

A Reintegration Resource

Youth Justice Services Division

February, 2015

Our Vision:

The Ministry of Children and Youth Services envisions an Ontario where all children and youth have the best opportunity to succeed and reach their full potential.

Ministry of Children and Youth Services
Copies of this report can be obtained from
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Mission



Youth Justice Services Division

We will make a difference for children and youth at risk in Ontario by improving outcomes through supporting a continuum of evidence-based programming and building strong partnerships with youth, families, communities and governments.

What is reintegration?

The Ministry of Children and Youth Services has undertaken the transformation of youth justice programs and services in order to create a service continuum that reduces reoffending, contributes to community safety and prevents youth crime through rehabilitative programming, holding youth accountable, and creating opportunities for youth at risk.

Reintegration planning and services are intended to address the social, behavioural and environmental needs of youth in conflict with the law. Reintegration planning is a key component of case management planning that helps provide support to youth as they move through, and out of, the justice system. Reintegration services aim to reduce the risk of reoffending, as well as to support successful integration into school, work, home and the community.

To maximize rehabilitation and reintegration opportunities, support begins as soon as youth enter the youth justice system and evolves with the changing needs of youth as they move through the range of services. Collaboration and communication across the continuum are essential components of successful reintegration. Probation Officers, facility staff and service providers collaborate as a case management team with youth, family, and other important people chosen by the youth, to identify, prioritize and address reintegration goals.

The *Supporting Effective Transitions for Ontario Youth: A Reintegration Resource* was developed to provide an overview of the reintegration process in youth justice service. The resource encourages people who plan and deliver reintegration services to continue to engage in conversations with one another to strengthen key aspects of the reintegration process such as coordination, collaboration, communication and information sharing.

The contents of this resource take into account the voices and wisdom of youth, reintegration stakeholders, and research on reintegration best practices to improve outcomes for children and youth at risk in Ontario.



How was this resource developed?

The Ontario Youth Action Plan (YAP) was released in 2012 to foster safer communities and give young people the support and opportunities they need to succeed. One of the initiatives under the YAP was a commitment to review and strengthen reintegration supports so that youth in conflict with the law can transition smoothly through, and out of, Ontario's youth justice system. This commitment included the creation of a reintegration planning resource document.

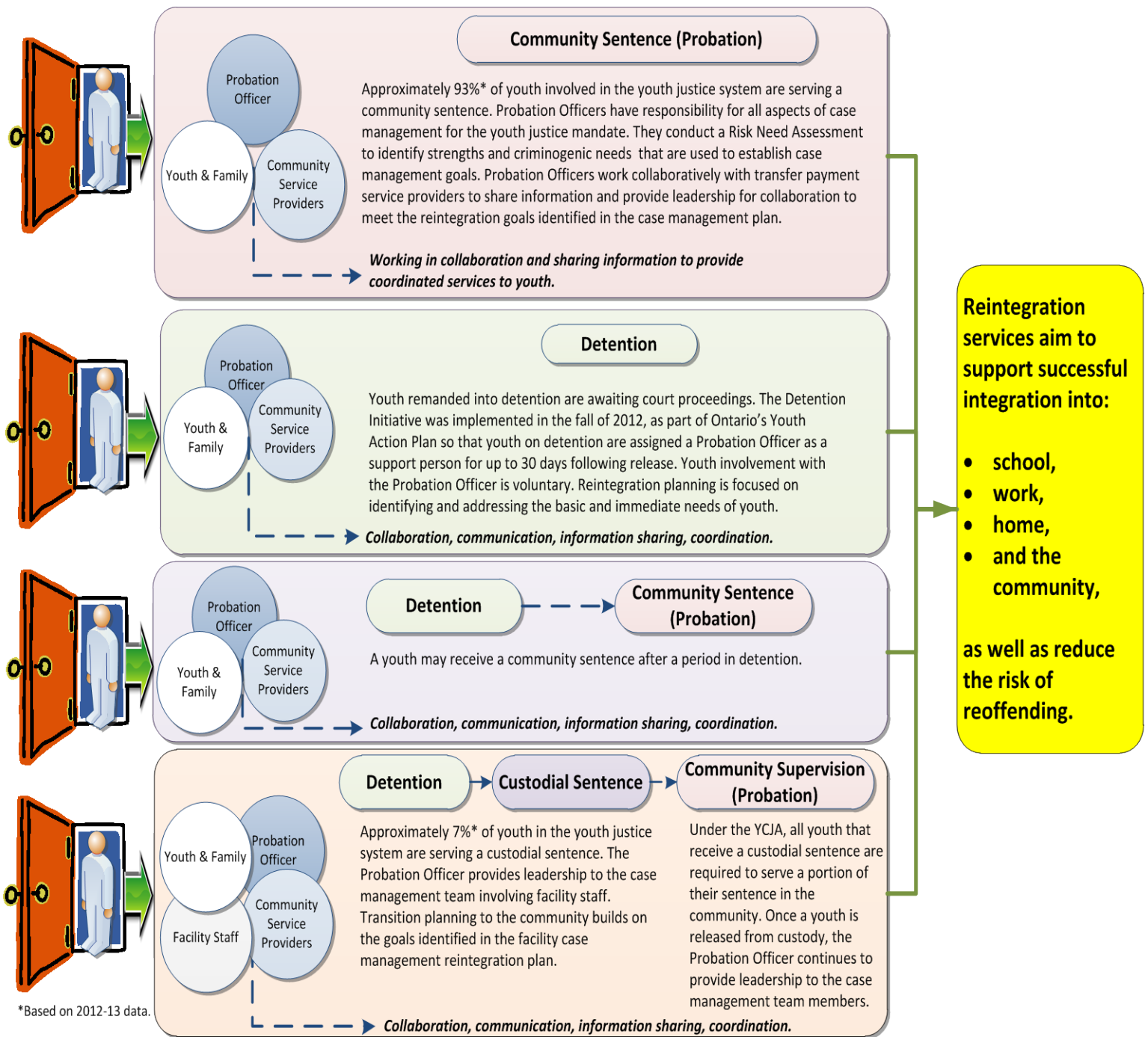
The development of this reintegration resource began in May 2013 with the engagement of stakeholders in Central Region. Following recommendations made in consultation with advisory groups, the engagement process expanded to include other areas of the province.

Over the past year, we have heard from youth, their families, youth justice service providers and other stakeholders across the province to learn about the good practices already in place that help to support youth throughout their reintegration process. We combined reintegration research with advice from all stakeholders groups to develop this resource.



The reintegration pathway

Reintegration planning is not a one point in time event, but a continuous process that differs, depending on each youth’s circumstances. Reintegration may involve a number of pathways and transition points into, through and eventually, out of the youth justice system. **The chart below outlines the different reintegration pathways through the youth justice system.**



*Based on 2012-13 data.

Working together: Everyone on the same page

During the development of this reintegration resource, it was important to align current reintegration practices with the *best practices* outlined in the research, as well as the feedback we gathered from youth and community partners across the province.

This is what we learned

What the research says: Case management plans should be holistic, structured, individualized and focused on a youth's strengths. Case management plans that respond to a youth's individual responsibility factors, such as culture, diversity, gender, and/or mental health, are most effective.

What youth said: I need to have a voice and play a primary role in case management/reintegration planning. I want the supportive people in my life, like my family, to be involved.

What our partners said: Reintegration planning should be conducted using a relationship and strengths-based approach. Case management plans should respond to individual needs and circumstances.

What the research says: Transition planning should begin at the first point of contact with the justice system. Reintegration supports and services should continue as the youth moves through, and out of, the justice system.

What youth said: Work with me from the beginning to the end. Follow through with what you say you're going to do to help me.

What our partners said: Reintegration planning should be a continuous process that begins at first contact and supports youth across, and out of the system.

Current expectations

Probation Officers place youth, family, and other important people identified by youth, at the centre of case management planning and service provision. Case management plans are created to respond to the individual risks, needs and strengths of youth. Probation officers connect and engage with youth to build positive, trusting relationships, and help youth to problem solve.

Timing

Continuity of care begins with the detention initiative that offers the voluntary support of a Probation Officer to all youth placed in detention. Having one Probation Officer responsible throughout each youth's involvement with youth justice services increases the youth's awareness of, and access to, reintegration supports and services.

Working together: Everyone on the same page

What the research says: Effective transition planning and service provision recognizes the importance of service coordination and the roles that communication and collaboration play in the transfer of information between youth centres and community service providers, as well as among community partners.

What youth said: I need people on my case management team to communicate so that I am not repeating my story over and over. Case management team members need to share the plan so I don't get mixed messages.

What our partners said: Reintegration planning should be coordinated across ministries and community partners. Successful reintegration requires an efficient, streamlined approach to case management.

Collaboration

The Probation Officer provides continuity of care within the youth justice mandate. When service providers are involved, the Probation Officer works with them to develop a team approach to service delivery by aligning and coordinating services.

What the research says: Reintegration planning and services should focus on criminogenic service targets that are identified and prioritized through an assessment process, and detailed in the Case Management Reintegration Plan or Case Management Plan.

What youth said: It helps me to have someone to talk to who really listens. Get to know who I am, be real with me and show an interest, ask me about my culture, attempt to speak my language.

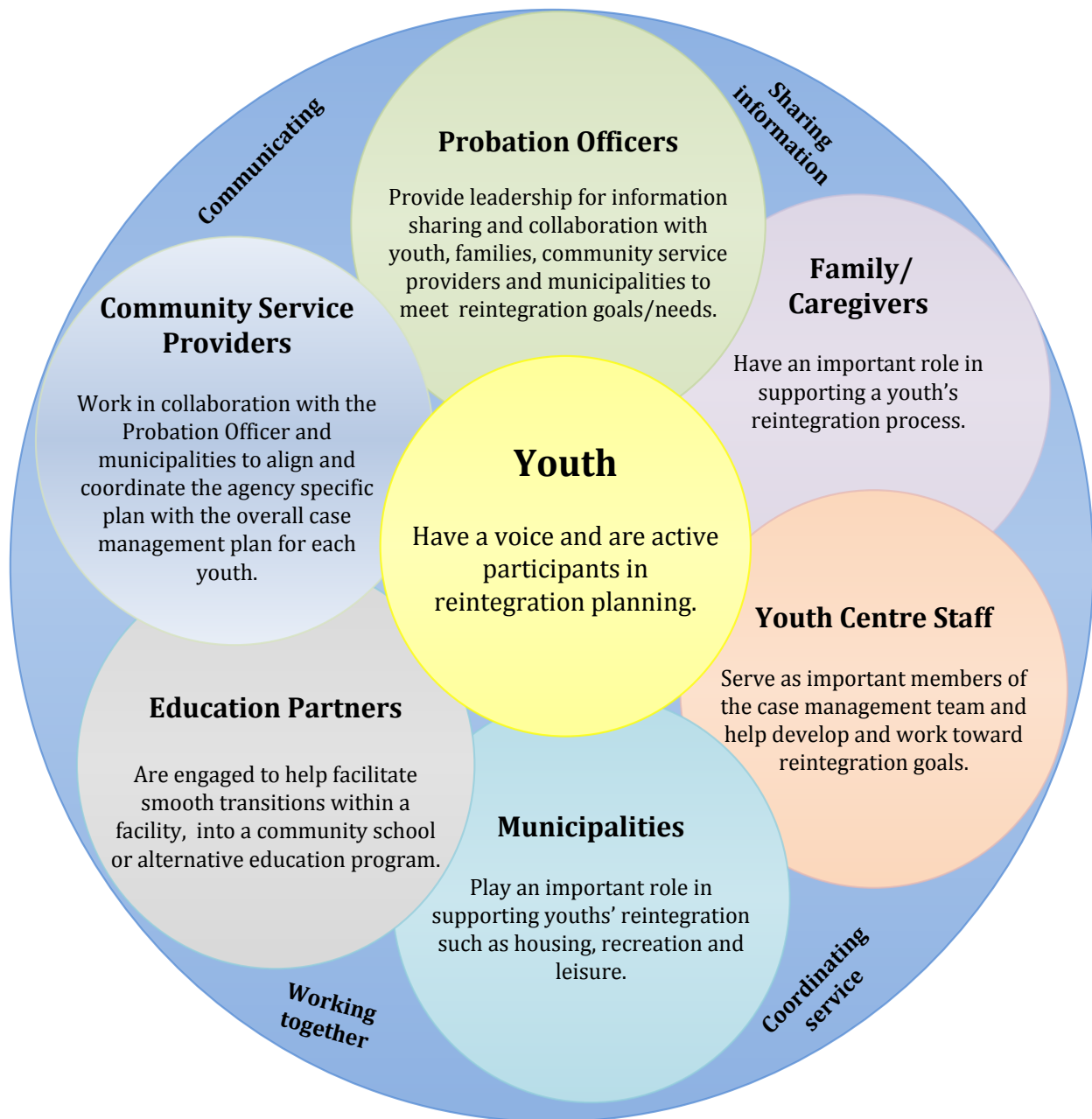
What our partners said: Assessment information needs to reflect a youth's current situation. Reintegration plans should align with assessment information.

Assessment

Case management planning emphasizes the importance of an assessment-based approach to identify criminogenic risks and needs. Case management plans are created that are current and tailored to each youth. Case management goals and interventions build on a young person's strengths.

What is your role in reintegration?

Case management planning for successful reintegration can include representation from a range of partners who work collaboratively to meet the individual needs of youth.



Reintegration best practices

Information collected from the engagement sessions with youth and regional reintegration stakeholders has been brought together with reintegration best practice research to form the following ‘reintegration best practices’. The guidelines and links to the supporting documentation are intended to be used to enhance the work already being done with youth.

- **INCREASE ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION IN DECISION-MAKING:**
 - Ensure youth and families are participants in making decisions about how services are designed and delivered.
 - Continuously create opportunities to involve youth and families in program design, implementation, delivery and assessment.
 - Establish safe forums and activities for youth and families so their requests and concerns with services are heard.

- **PLACE YOUTH AND FAMILIES AT THE HEART OF SERVICE PROVISION:**
 - Personalize services to tailor them to the needs, the potential, and the evolving lives of youth and their families.
 - Wrap services around youth and families, rather than have youth and families wrap their lives around programs.
 - Provide opportunities to help youth develop resilience by enhancing protective factors and helping to mitigate risk factors.

- **FOSTER YOUTH LEADERSHIP:**
 - Support young people involved in services to develop and exemplify leadership, both in the context of the services they receive, and as active members of their communities.
 - Promote opportunities for youth involved in services to participate in community activities.
 - Establish opportunities within services for young people to build leadership skills.

Reintegration best practices

- **STRENGTHEN SERVICE INTERCONNECTIVITY:**
 - Build towards a single, multidisciplinary plan of care for each youth.
 - Provide young people and their families with the information, tools and supports they need to improve their experience in shaping, accessing and receiving services.
 - Treat youth and families with respect and dignity.
- **STRENGTHEN COMMUNITIES:**
 - Encourage and enable communities to play a leading role in supporting the success of youth.
 - Provide opportunities for communities and community leaders, including youth and families, to shape and develop local solutions for improving outcomes.

We hope this document will be used to inspire continuing dialogue among all of the key reintegration role players who work together for the successful reintegration of youth as they move through, and out of, Ontario's youth justice system.

Helpful resources



ROOTS OF YOUTH VIOLENCE

In 2008, Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty requested a review of the *roots of violence* in the aftermath of the fatal shooting of a high school student. This task was not simply to ask for short-term ideas about how to deploy yet more law enforcement resources to try to suppress this kind of violence. Rather, the goal was to find out where the violence was stemming from, and what might be done to address these issues to make Ontario safer in the long term. The result was the *Roots of Violence* document.

<http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/topics/youthandthelaw/roots/introduction.aspx>



STEPPING UP

Stepping Up establishes a strategic framework to help guide, focus and maximize the collaborative actions to support young people. *Stepping Up* is a set of 20 outcomes that can help service providers, foundations, community groups, governments, young leaders and families to better align their work with what research and youth themselves say is important for their success.

<http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/topics/youthopportunities/steppingup/contents.aspx>



STEPPING STONES

Across Ontario, hundreds of dedicated organizations and individuals are making a difference for youth every day. *Stepping Stones* is intended to support and enhance the work of these adult allies by presenting, in a clear and cohesive way, a shared understanding of how youth develop.

http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/topics/youthopportunities/steppingstones/youth_policy.aspx



YOUTH LEAVING CARE REPORT

In July 2012, the Youth Leaving Care Working Group was established by the Minister of Children and Youth Services, in conjunction with the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth. Its mandate was to act on the first recommendation of *My REAL Life Book—Report of the Youth Leaving Care Hearings*, which was received by the Ontario legislature in May 2012.

<http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/topics/childrensaidthechildrensociety/reports/youthleavingcare.aspx>

Glossary of terms

- 1) **Reintegration Services:** The assessed social, behavioural and/or educational needs of youth in conflict with the law who are receiving community supervision or transitioning to the community from custody/detention. Reintegration services are intended to reduce the risk of reoffending and support the youth's successful integration into school and/or work, home and the community.
- 2) **Criminogenic factors:** Attributes and circumstances of individuals that are directly linked to criminal behaviour. Criminogenic needs are considered dynamic factors, suggesting that these factors are amenable to change and, if changed, can reduce recidivism.
- 3) **Best Practice:** Programs, services or direct practice delivery that utilizes techniques or methodologies that, through experience and research, have proven to reliably lead to a desired result.
- 4) **Responsivity factors:** Responsivity comprises two parts:
 - i. **General Responsivity** is the use of cognitive social learning methods to influence a youth's behaviour.
 - ii. **Specific Responsivity** is the use of cognitive behavioural interventions, taking into account a youth's strengths, learning style, personality, motivation and bio-social characteristics, such as gender and race. Responsivity factors include protective factors or strengths, such as a youth's creativity, athleticism or a strong social support network.

