

# FAMILY- ENGAGED CASE PLANNING MODEL

## KEY CONCEPTS

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THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION



### Background

The Annie E. Casey Foundation's Juvenile Justice Strategy Group (JJSJ) began an engagement to support juvenile justice reform with the New York City (NYC) Department of Juvenile Probation (DOP) in 2009, as a result of a request from then NYC DOP commissioner Vincent Schiraldi. The emphasis was on developing policies, programs, strategies and tools which kept low risk youth out of the system and produced effective outcomes for higher risk youth served by Probation. Enhanced probation practice goals were established in order to expand the system's capacity to manage youth and achieve effective outcomes in the community, rather than in correctional settings and/or expensive out of home placements which produced traditionally poor results.

The emerging critical issue had become focused on what happen once a youth is screened, assessed, sentenced and placed on probation. The majority of the Departments' probation practice remained fixed on traditional and ineffective systems of managing youth; tracking compliance, providing consequences and maintaining a typically adversarial authority relationship with probationers. Probation had no clear beginning process, no established goals and no incentive to complete for youth. The overall purpose of probation was geared to compliance and not to changing behavior. Deputy commissioner Ana Bermudez asked Casey for technical assistance help in order to develop a new and different way of planning and managing probation cases; a process more based on engagement, clearly defined goals, celebration of success and ultimately on achieving long term behavior change. This reform effort ultimately led to the development of a process, and tool, for case planning and management - the Individualized Action Plan (IAP).

Subsequent to the development of the Case Plan (IAP) training and implementation in NYC, the Foundation has provided the Case Plan training and technical assistance for implementation processes in two of its original "Deep-End" sites: Marion County, Indiana and Jefferson Parish, Louisiana. In considering a new kind of case planning process and tool, the Casey consultants and department administrations in the three sites identified a set of key concepts that would be the foundations of the new strategy:

- The probation relationship had to be focused on probation officers **Engaging** with youth and families
- There needed to be an emphasis on using a realistic **Change model (Stages of Change)** that focused on starting by meeting people where they are in terms of readiness for change, and built incrementally upon small success
- It was critical to develop a meaningful process for **Developing Goals** that meant something to the youth and family (**SMART goals**)- Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Timely

- That the process and relationship should start with the development of **Common Ground**- identification of an achievable goal that was important to all the parties (Court, probation, youth, family members)
- The need to incorporate a model of **Graduated Response**- in which both accountability and recognition would be equally provided in a fair, measured and predictable manner
- That the case plan would be **Strength- Based** and seek to measure and incorporate the assets, skills and resources that the youth and family could bring to the process

## Why Develop a Case Planning Tool?

There has long been an ongoing debate about the effectiveness of probation supervision in achieving the primary aims of juvenile justice: creating cost efficient practices that serve to create safer communities and assist often troubled young people to become productive adults. The Casey Foundation expansion of its JDAI initiative to the Deep-End has included Probation strategies to pioneer a new style of supervision that transform the role of probation officers from counting contacts with youth on probation to engaging and motivating youth and families to participate in the development of supervision plans for becoming law abiding and productive citizens. In order to accomplish this, it is necessary to develop a new kind of road map and way of doing business. The old way of conducting probation had not proved very effective, most often disenfranchising youth and leading to poor outcomes. The basis of the traditional probation relationship is one of monitoring, coercion and forced cooperation- holding youth accountable for often unrealistic or unmanageable terms set by the Court, and then monitoring them to violate their probation when they fail to live up to terms that they have never bought into or value. It was recognized that there needed to be a more effective mechanism to help kids and their families devise a plan to not only complete probation but achieve better long term outcomes; outcomes that were desirable for both the system and the youth and family themselves. Such a system would provide an opportunity for youths and families to take ownership in the plan and process, which would lead to greater success. The process would also give probation officers a much clearer structure for conducting their business and implementing probation supervision.

The case planning tool has now been initiated in three local sites with varying degrees of implementation at this time. The New York City Juvenile Probation Department, which was the first site exposed to the training and the model (2009), has fully integrated the family-engaged case plan practice (called the “Individual Action Plan or IAP) into its probation department approach and protocols and has recently included required use of the IAP as part of its new case management system software; so that every youth and family have an IAP entered at the start of probation, and have it maintained/updated in the system throughout time on probation.. Marion County and Jefferson Parrish have also more recently implemented the use of the case plan as a regular element of required probation practice, and this manual represents a compendium of learnings from the experiences in training and implementation in all three sites.

## THE KEY CONCEPTS

**I Family Engagement** *“Families may or may not be part of the problem, but are almost always part of the solution”*

In many of our juvenile justice systems probation is primarily focused on technical compliance and counting contacts with youth. Often times, there is little attempt to build a relationship and find common goals, nor to work with people based on their current readiness for change. This system leads to disenfranchised youth and families that often feel as though the system is “doing things to them” instead of working with them. While these youth are not under supervision voluntarily, and some may not see it as the system’s responsibility to focus on what a youth and family wants, we make that decision at our own risk.

Rather than using this traditional “checklist” approach, this case planning model seeks to shift that orientation toward behavior change by building a culture in which probation officers engage with the youth and their family to motivate young people to participate in the development of supervision plans that not only prevent re-arrest during supervision, but also help them become law-abiding and productive citizens in the long-term.

***The probation relationship works best when founded on meaningful engagement of youth and families by probation officers. Engagement, in this sense, involves the development of a real and sustainable connection between the PO, the youth and his/her family. This engagement should be oriented toward an agreement upon a shared purpose and goals to achieve through the process of probation.***

The initial development of a probation case plan provides an opportunity to develop a relationship with youth and families, meet them where they are, establish a common ground, and to recognize and build upon successes. In essence, the building of relationships with youths and families becomes a primary function for the juvenile probation officer. Rather than simply completing the plan as quickly as possible, developing a shared set of goals becomes the priority. The use of SMART goals (see Key Concept IV- SMART goals) breaks down conditions of probation as well as the client’s needs/goals into achievable, measurable pieces- and allows an ongoing system that recognizes and builds upon those achievements, and celebrates success. The *art* of engagement needs to become a focal point for probation practice as well as ongoing training and development, as it is often a somewhat foreign concept in everyday probation practice.

Furthermore, this case planning process is predicated on the involvement of parents and/or other significant family members whenever possible. Decades of practice have taught us that families often present the key to any successful probation intervention with young people. Because the parent is often critical to successful execution of the case plan, the PO must also engage the parent in a way that promotes buy-in and the shared pursuit of common goals. Family members are engaged in the planning process by drawing out how they would like to see probation proceed, finding out what kind of goals they have and what they would like to have help with. POs make it clear that the family members’ thoughts and opinions are important, include them in each step of the case planning process, and make it logistically easier for family to participate. The parent/family’s roles as “experts” about their child are stressed and valued and the PO works to “sell” the value of probation to them.

This case plan model additionally proscribes that if parents are unwilling or unable to participate, it is both important and necessary to find other family members (or surrogate family members) to engage in the process. Probation officers should thus identify a “circle of care” for the youth, which provides a list

of potential pro-social adults in the child's life who can be a resource or assist with implementation if the parent is unwilling or unavailable.

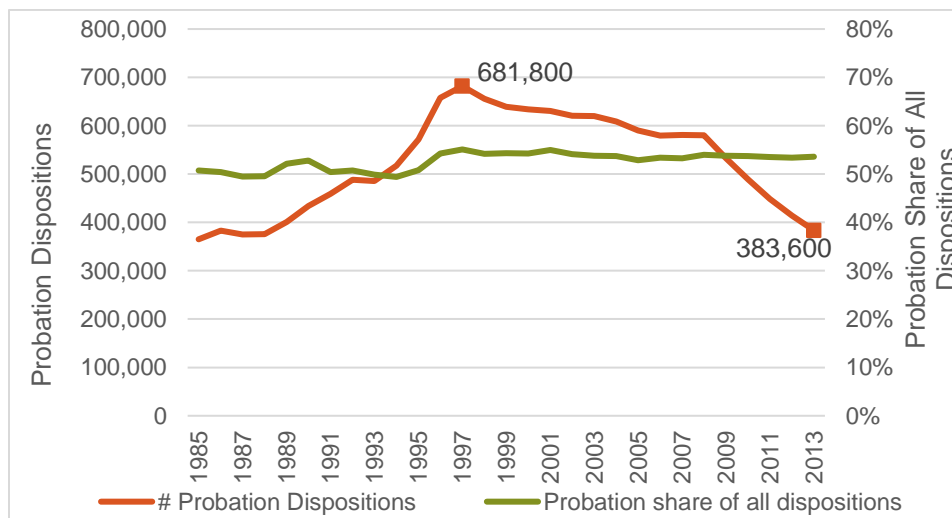
*From decades of experience in the field, experts have seen that the relationship between probation officer and the client is typically more important than any particular case planning tool in achieving behavior change. Thus, the process of engagement (a skill that can be taught and practiced) presents a major focal point (and opportunity) to engage in effective case planning, and to make probation a successful change intervention.*

## II Compliance vs. Change

In 2002, the University of Cincinnati conducted a national survey on juvenile justice. Over 2000 respondents, including more than 200 judges, were asked questions about the current status of juvenile justice practice. ***When asked why they placed youth on probation, the most frequent response from the judges included some variation on the following: "I place kids on probation because I have to do something."***

Across the country, probation is the most common disposition for adjudicated youth. Yet, to the respondents in the University of Cincinnati survey, probation has really been a disposition by default – one without a specific purpose or goal, and certainly not one expected to have a lasting impact on the behavior of youth. Nevertheless, it is the disposition chosen for thousands of court-involved youth each year. In many ways, this represents the ultimate paradox of juvenile probation: we put youth into a legally sanctioned supervision program for which we often have no clear idea about the specific results we are trying to obtain or what will constitute success. Furthermore, the experience of young probationers is often one of a long road trip with no map and an uncertain destination.

### Number of Probation Dispositions & Probation Share of All Delinquency Dispositions



*Probation as a default disposition: Though the number of probation dispositions has significantly decreased, probation as a share of all dispositions has changed very little.*

*So what exactly is the real purpose of Probation? Here we suggest the following: The **purpose of probation** is to have significant, positive change in behaviors, skills, knowledge, thinking and attitudes for the purpose of reducing criminal behavior and increasing community safety. In essence, we want the youth to not be interested in offending – we do not want them still interested in offending and solely being compliant until they get off probation.*

To accomplish this goal, probation has traditionally focused on monitoring, coercion and forced cooperation, in which youth are punished for failure to comply with court-ordered terms that are often unrealistic and boilerplate in nature. In doing so, probation has primarily been about technical compliance and counting contacts with youth, rather than guiding them through a process of learning to change. Yet, we have data from across the country that suggests that this approach fails to rehabilitate and leads to increased penetration into the juvenile justice system. Furthermore, we have learned through a century of practice that the most powerful characteristic of any successful program is a belief that one can help the client change and one's ability to communicate this to the youth to motivate them – a concept that is not compatible with a “nail ‘em, tail ‘em, jail ‘em” approach.

*Instead, the Annie E. Casey Foundation is promoting an approach to community supervision that shifts probation practice away from an emphasis on monitoring and compliance to one that focuses on behavior change. This is accomplished by building a culture in which probation officers engage and motivate young people to participate in the development of supervision plans that not only prevent re-arrest during supervision, but also help them become law-abiding and productive citizens in the long-term.*

So where does the idea of compliance fit in? When judges place youth on probation, they stipulate a set of court-ordered terms to be followed. This legal expectation certainly has merit and should not be taken lightly. Indeed, compliance is a key element of the change process: the part that provides the necessary accountability. But, with compliance alone we are, at best, only guaranteed success while under supervision. Is that what we really want - for court-involved youth to walk the line while they are under our thumb? This amounts to a “not under my watch” mentality in which we strive to obtain good results while a youth is under our jurisdiction, knowing that what happens afterward is someone else's concern. This may lead to a successful stint on probation, but may do nothing to prevent a plethora of continuing problems with delinquency, education, mental health/substance abuse systems, child welfare involvement, and eventually the adult criminal justice system.

The process of successfully pursuing change with juveniles will require the development of realistic change goals that will help the PO guide the youth (and family) towards a successful conclusion to probation, as well as functional life opportunities. However, this process is a complex one that must begin with engagement and the development of a real relationship. Change-oriented probation involves a clear planning process based on:

- Use of a goal-oriented case plan
- Clear expectations
- No surprises
- A strengths-based approach
- A family engagement process
- Time-limited probation – “light at the end of the tunnel”
- Measurable results
- Road and mile markers

Instead, the juvenile justice system should capitalize on its unique position to capture and act on “teachable moments” for youth/families which can lead to genuine and lasting change; change that can turn troubled youth into productive adults and “tax-eaters” into “tax payers”. Compliance alone amounts to giving our kids fish. Change allows us to teach them to fish, accomplishing the systems’ priority goals of a safer community, more skilled, competent and adaptable young people, and reduced program costs often associated with the traditional need to place youth in out of home environments. Compliance and change are NOT mutually exclusive, but compliance only will only get us so far.

### III Common Ground (CG)

The process of establishing a relationship and developing an effective supervision plan should start with the development of some common ground – i.e., identification of at least one achievable goal that is important to all parties (the court, probation, youth, and family members).

Getting to common ground should usually occur in the first meeting with the probation officer, the youth and the family, in which the primary focus is to find at least one goal (can be more) that can be shared by all parties – regardless of how small it is or how little it may relate to long term change. For example, in very adversarial situations, the common denominator may be as basic as agreeing to keep the youth safe as a goal that is shared by all. Establishing common ground helps to begin the engagement process and provide a simple way to demonstrate the process of goal setting in a non-threatening manner.

The Case Planning process starts with the development of this Common Ground goal- usually done at the Intake stage, prior to, and in preparation for Disposition. The CG goal(s) should be simple and achievable and, by necessity, short term; a goal that can be potentially completed in the time period between the intake process and the dispositional hearing. Successes can then be presented in Court at the hearing as a way for the Court to give praise for initial efforts. The CG goal(s) process typically carries over, with new or elaborated goals, once the youth is placed on Probation and forms the basis of the initial full case plan. This type of goal planning serves as a precursor to eventually proceeding to the development of more complicated risk-based goals.

### IV SMART Goals

A good case plan provides a guide for helping youth and families understand *how* they will achieve success while on probation. It makes use of SMART goals that are embraced by the youth and family to break down conditions of probation into achievable, measurable pieces- rather than using generic and very broad goals which often seem confusing and less than meaningful to kids. So what exactly are SMART goals? SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant and Timely) goals have five principle components:

**Specific:** The goals are broken down so that they are well-defined and give participants a clear understanding of what is to be sought and gained. The goal must be detailed. One must know the Who, What, Where, When, Which and Why of a goal. In order to be successful in reaching a goal, one must have a clear picture as to what one wants to achieve. Include a set number or level wherever possible. An example of a generic goal would be: “I want to do better at school.” An example of a specific goal would

be: "I want to improve my grades to a B average by the end of this semester by devoting two hours a day to schoolwork at home"

**Measurable:** Progress in attainment of the goal must be concretely measured. When progress is measured, one stays on track. And in reaching target dates, the success experienced will motivate the young person to work harder to achieve goals. Goals and objectives are measurable when they can be quantified: How many days of school will you attend this month? How much money do you want to save per week, month, or year? Youth are more likely to achieve their goals when they know the exact pace of progress toward achieving targets. When we set goals without being clear about what it will take to achieve them, it creates confusion about expectations and the potential for frustration on behalf of the youth who may think he is doing exactly what he is being asked. For example, we may ask a young person to "do better in school", but what does this mean for a child who is performing below his grade level or has not been attending school much of the year? This goal would only become measurable if it included a benchmark indicating "better performance". A measurable goal regarding school performance would be: "Over the next two weeks, I will achieve a 100% completion rate for all of my homework."

Measurable goals also help youth break down goals that may seem overwhelming into more understandable chunks, and they allow for the probation officer to celebrate successful completion of intermediate benchmarks even though the ultimate goal may not yet be achieved. For example, a goal to fully pay off restitution would only become measurable if it stated the desired amount of payments and when they would be paid: "In the next six months, I will pay \$40 dollars a month of my restitution, reducing my debt by \$240 to a total of \$660 owed."

**Attainable:** A goal is said to be attainable when its accomplishment is within reach. The goals set with youth and families need to be attainable- or they lead to frustration, apathy, and ultimately, disconnection from the process. Is this goal something they have the skills and abilities to achieve? Is this goal something they are motivated to achieve? Are they in a position to take steps and perform tasks necessary to achieve the goal? An example of an attainable goal would be for a 17 year old finishing the 11th grade to go to summer school in order to make up failed credits and be able to graduate from high school the following spring. A non-attainable goal would be for a 16 year old in the 8th grade to create a plan to traditionally graduate from high school.

Sometimes it may not be possible for POs to set attainable goals for the youth on their caseloads, for reasons beyond their control. For example, there may be a restitution order beyond the youth and family's ability to pay in a reasonable amount of time. It is, however, up to the PO to help them understand what is in their control and how they can chip away at the amount. At the same time, the PO should be proactive in communicating to the court about the youth and family's efforts to achieve the goal, and making recommendations that may be in the best interest of the court, the community, *and* the youth, such as transitioning the case to an administrative caseload to handle it as a civil matter, rather than keeping the child on probation while the restitution is collected.

**Relevant:** Goals should be connected to the reason a young person is on probation in the first place. Sometimes when youth end up under the supervision of the juvenile justice system, the best intentions of an individual overseeing a case can inadvertently lead to longer probation terms and deeper system penetration based on concerns that are not directly related to public safety. For example, it is well established that becoming a teen parent puts a young person at a greater risk of poor outcomes in the long term. However, becoming a teen parent is not against the law, nor can we be confident that becoming a teen parent will directly result in continued delinquency. Therefore, creating a goal around preventing teen pregnancy is not relevant to the reason youth are placed on probation and should not be part of the case plan. That is not to say that the PO cannot help the young person think through how to avoid teen pregnancy, but it should not determine success or failure on probation.

**Timely:** A goal should be anchored on a time frame – otherwise there is no urgency in accomplishing it. Without a timeframe, we have no ability to measure goals, to focus on and celebrate successes, or to make adaptations/adjustments when progress towards a goal is not being made. Additionally, a timely goal implies a reasonable and achievable amount of time. For kids, shorter is always better – longer term goals spread out timelines, causing them to lose meaning and seem overwhelming to young people. For example, when dealing with a young person who has not been going to school for months, it is advisable to initially focus on school for the next week or so, rather than for the rest of the school year, with the intention to build on that initial improvement to eventually reach the long term goal of full-time attendance over the course of a school year.

## **V Shared Roles & Responsibilities**

The previous key concepts have described how probation officers can develop a set of goals that are meaningful to the youth and family while simultaneously addressing the reasons the young person has been placed on probation. But it is also important to think about the steps that need to be taken to successfully reach those goals. That is why this case planning approach also proscribes the importance of identifying responsibilities for each party involved: the youth, the parent/family members, *and* the probation officer. This is important because each party has a role to play and listing those out will enhance the likelihood that the goal will be completed. But, even more critically, it emphasizes the partnership and engagement elements of the process.

In typical probation relationships, the PO assigns tasks and conditions to the youth and family, but is often viewed as an uninvolved in the execution of the plan with a primary role of making sure the youth is doing what he said he would do. In the new model, the PO becomes an actively engaged participant, who assumes a share of the tasks and responsibilities for the success of the plan. She/he thus demonstrates a commitment to the success of the plan and to the nature of the partnership between the system and the family.

The assignment of specific roles additionally provides an opportunity to determine how and what to address when progress is not made on a goal. For instance, if a youth is to attend school daily, but is dependent of a ride from a parent who is not making themselves available, the plan adjustment would then focus on working with the parent on assuming this responsibility, rather than holding the youth accountable for not going to school. In measuring goal achievement, we are then able to not only measure the overall progress towards the goal, but the progress of each party in meeting their responsibilities. When the PO also has this responsibility placed on them, they have the opportunity to model follow-through and to also model accepting responsibility if failing to do their part. All of this serves to create a greater sense of engagement, which is most likely to result in genuine goal commitment and, ultimately, behavior change.

The completed Case Plan then becomes a key tool in the process and practice of Probation. It is not an atypical practice in many jurisdictions for case plans to be completed solely to comply with some administrative mandate or funding obligation. In reality, these kinds of case plans are often filed away once completed and only referenced if the youth is in violation or as a checklist for potential termination of probation. This model, alternatively, seeks to create meaningful and engaged case plans that provide a road map for the probation process. Goals are clear, achievable and measurable. Accomplishments are celebrated. Setbacks are assessed and the plan adjusted accordingly. Youth and families know and understand where they are in the process of complying with and completing probation; more importantly they have a template to measure their own change process. The Probation Officer becomes the keeper of the Plan and the shepherd of the process, referencing the case plan at each probation appointment- using



the plan itself as a yardstick for progress, and to establish new goals and directions. The case plan incorporates the use of the risk instrument, the court orders and any other existing format for required plan documentation, into one user friendly document that allows the youth and family to understand what is expected, to troubleshoot barriers and setbacks, and to measure their own progress.

## VI Stages of Change

The Stages of Change Model (Prochaska and DiClemente) poses that behavior change does not happen in one step. Rather, people tend to progress through different stages on their way to successful change. Also, each of us progresses through the stages at our own rate. ***Relapse from established progress is a normal and predictable part of any change process, and should be considered and accounted for.***

In juvenile justice, it is not uncommon for Probation to establish goals and case plans for youth and families that are incompatible with their readiness and ability to meet those goals and plans. The Family-Engaged Case Plan process seeks instead to “meet people where they are”; recognizing their openness and amenability to change and creating plans that take their unique characteristics and situations into account. For instance, when we poll probation officers about youth they deal with and ask them to ascribe a label for their individual stages of change, most officers readily acknowledge that the majority of the kids they deal with are in either a “pre-contemplation” or “contemplation” stage. And, yet, if we analyze typical probation case plans, they are most often oriented and designed towards people who are at a “preparation” or “action” stage of change. Ultimately, this means we are creating goals and case plans that are often doomed to fail, as the people we create them for are not ready to deal with the kinds of issues we have set forth for them.

In essence, to have successful case planning, we must recognize where youth and families are in their readiness for change and use that as a starting place to create realistic and achievable goals and plans.

### **The stages of change are:**

- Pre-contemplation (Not yet acknowledging that there is a problem behavior that needs to be changed)
- Contemplation (Acknowledging that there is a problem but not yet ready or sure of wanting to make a change)
- Preparation/Determination (Getting ready to change)
- Action/Willpower (Changing behavior)
- Maintenance (Maintaining the behavior change) and
- Relapse (Returning to older behaviors and abandoning the new changes)

### *Stage One: Precontemplation*

In the Precontemplation stage, people are not thinking seriously about changing and are not interested in any kind of help. People in this stage tend to defend their current behaviors and do not feel it is a problem. They may be defensive in the face of other people's efforts to pressure them.

### Stage Two: Contemplation

In the contemplation stage people are more aware of the personal consequences of their behaviors and they spend time thinking about their problem. Although they are able to consider the possibility of changing, they tend to be ambivalent about it.

In this stage, people are on a teeter-totter, weighing the pros and cons of quitting or modifying their behavior. Although they think about the negative aspects of their behavior and the positives associated with giving it up (or reducing), they may doubt that the long-term benefits associated with changing will outweigh the short-term costs.

### Stage Three: Preparation/Determination

In the preparation/determination stage, people have made a commitment to make a change. Their motivation for changing is reflected by statements such as: "I've got to do something about this - this is serious. Something has to change. What can I do?"

This is sort of a research phase: people are now taking small steps toward change. They are trying to gather information about what they will need to do to change their behavior.

### Stage Four: Action/Willpower

This is the stage where people believe they have the ability to change their behavior and are actively involved in taking steps to change their behavior by using a variety of different techniques.

This is the shortest of all the stages. The amount of time people spend in action varies. It generally lasts about 6 months, but it can literally be as short as one hour! This is a stage when people most depend on their own willpower. They are making overt efforts to quit or change the behavior and are at greatest risk for relapse.

### Stage Five: Maintenance

Maintenance involves being able to successfully avoid any temptations to return to bad behaviors. The goal of the maintenance stage is to maintain the new status quo. People in this stage tend to remind themselves of how much progress they have made.

People in maintenance constantly reformulate the rules of their lives and are acquiring new skills to deal with life and avoid relapse. They are able to anticipate the situations in which a relapse could occur and prepare coping strategies in advance.

### Stage Six: Relapse

Along the way to permanent change or stable reduction of behaviors, most people experience relapse. In fact, it is much more common to have at least one relapse than not. Relapse is often accompanied by feelings of discouragement and seeing oneself as a failure.

While relapse can be discouraging, the majority of people who successfully change do not follow a straight path to a life time free of self-destructive bad habits. Rather, they cycle through the five stages

several times before achieving a stable life style change. Consequently, the Stages of Change Model considers relapse to be normal.

There is a real risk that people who relapse will experience an immediate sense of failure that can seriously undermine their self-confidence. The important thing is that if they do slip they shouldn't see themselves as having failed.

## **VII Normal Adolescence**

Often times defined as the second decade of life, adolescence is the period of transition from childhood to adulthood. Researchers now note that bodily and brain changes associated with adolescence may begin as early as age 8 and extend until age 24.

Among adolescents, a certain degree of disobedience, experimentation, or independence seeking is common. In fact, the American Psychiatric Association (1994) indicates that the onset of oppositional behaviors in adolescence may be due to the process of normal development and a push towards individualization. On the other hand, adolescents who persistently and progressively engage in problem behaviors with significant impairment in personal development, social functioning, poor academic achievement, and vocational preparation are of great concern.

In the process of managing youth on probation and in creating dynamic, productive and engaged case plans, it is imperative that we take into the account the range of “normal adolescent behavior”. Once kids break the law and become involved in the juvenile justice system, it is easy to fall into the trap of expecting them to become perfectly behaved young adults, which is in obvious contradiction to what we know about adolescent behavior and development. Kids, even those on probation, make mistakes and do stupid things; it goes with the territory. So, it become critical for those juvenile justice practitioners to apply some code of reason about how to respond to youth digressions. For instance, is it inappropriate for a 16 year old boy on probation, to be caught looking at pornographic sites on the internet? Well we basically know that this depends on a lot of factors, but might certainly be viewed as in the range of “normal” for this age group.

Many jurisdiction have enacted protocols and policies to have methods of **Graduated Response** to insure an appropriate scale of accountability tempered with understanding of the bounds of normalcy. Don't overreact, don't underreact, but make any consequence both fit and be developmentally appropriate for the indiscretion. The same concepts apply when we are formulating appropriate family-engaged, strength-based case plan goals. Good plans avoid trying to target behaviors (for change) that are indeed within the range of normal for kids who are not in the juvenile justice system (i.e. - occasional experimentation with alcohol use).

Our challenge, as juvenile justice professionals, is often to not become so influenced by a steady stream of bad behavior so that we tend to auto-respond to any misbehavior as being appropriate for intervention.

## **VIII Strength-based Approach**

Strength-based practice is a practice that emphasizes people's self-determination and strengths. It is a philosophy and a way of viewing clients as resourceful and resilient in the face of adversity. It is client-led, with a focus on future outcomes and strengths that people bring to a problem or crisis.

The strength-based approach is often referred to as a response to more deficit-focused or pathological approaches. For example, Laursen and Nissen noted that in the field of youth justice, the mainstream corrections model focuses on risks, needs, and addresses weaknesses. Alternatively, the strength-based approach enhances strengths, and builds on characteristics that are already present in individuals. Although applied differently depending on the population and service, the approach has been characterized as a philosophy or lens through which people are viewed and through which interventions are planned and managed. This strength-based philosophy holds the core belief that all individuals have strengths and resources. The focus of the practice is on a person's skills, interests and support systems. Its simple premise is to identify what is going well, to do more of it, and to build on it.

In creating effective family-engaged case plans, it is critical that we identify, utilize and emphasize the strengths that youth and families bring to that moment in time. When we look at a social history or pre-sentence investigation, it is easy to see the levels of difficulty, trauma and deviance clearly displayed by the kids and families entering the juvenile justice system. But, if we look more carefully, that same report, can be a wellspring of potential youth and family strengths. An emphasis on strengths allows the juvenile justice practitioner to more easily connect and engage with families and to create goal plans that use the family's existing familial, community and social resources to achieve change.

*An effective beginning to the case planning process is for the probation officer to engage with the family to create a strengths inventory; looking for places to opportunities to find common ground and to allow an often overwhelmed and chaotic family to define positives and resources to help inform the creation of the case plan.*

## **IX Positive Youth Development (PYD)**

When developing an effective case planning process, it is equally important to incorporate the concepts of Positive Youth Development (similarly to incorporating the Strength-Based approach). How do we assist troubled youngsters entering the system to develop competencies that will allow them to become productive adults and avoid further system penetration? Clearly, research informs us that one element of such an intervention process is to find ways for young people to engage in positive activities and skill development, which allow them to feel good about themselves and experience age-appropriate successes.

According to the well-known Chapin Hall Positive Youth Development Brief (Butts, Mayer and Ruth, 2005): "The concepts of positive youth development suggest that nearly all youth are capable of growing up properly and avoiding trouble if they can be attached to a variety of social resources that facilitate healthy development and discourage harmful behavior. Concentrating on positive youth development goals in working with young offenders may provide the juvenile justice system with a new and compelling framework for service delivery, especially in cases involving younger juveniles and those charged with less serious crimes."

Non-violent offenses account for more than half the youth referred to juvenile court, but there are few theories of intervention for them. The Probation response is often based on simple deterrence, or the belief that punishment changes behavior. These youngsters are often either ordered to

comply with basic court “punishment conditions or they are given low-intensity probation with no explicit case planning.

Positive Youth Development is a comprehensive way of thinking about the development of children and youth and the factors that facilitate or impede their individual growth and their achievement of key developmental stages. The array of concepts known as PYD emerged from several decades of research on adolescent development. The PYD framework is an alternative to viewing adolescent development through the lens of problems and deficits. The deficit-based approach dominated developmental theory and social policy during much of the twentieth century. Because adolescents were seen as irresponsible and immature, it followed that they were unable to participate fully in society.

In recent decades, a number of factors combined to erode the dominance of the deficit-based perspective. Researchers began to challenge conventional assumptions about how human development occurs. Studies revealed that most children and youth manage to thrive and develop even in the presence of multiple environmental stresses. Michael Rutter and others began to use the term “resiliency” to describe the qualities that support healthy development in the face of adversity. Researchers began to investigate methods of increasing resiliency. Social programs started to incorporate such methods in their work with children and adolescents. (Butts, 2005)

These developments coalesced into the perspective now known as Positive Youth Development. The concepts of PYD suggest that most young people can develop and flourish if they are connected to the right mix of social resources.

For youth entering the juvenile justice and juvenile probation systems, it is clear that many of them have not grown up in situations that have provided desired opportunities to thrive and flourish. It thus becomes even more important for the probation approach to incorporate these kinds of opportunities if case plans, and ultimately, probation, are to have successful outcomes.

## **X Developing a Service Matrix**

When youth become court-involved, it is assumed that they are in need of some type of intervention, which may range from probation to intensive therapy in a secure residential setting. Numerous studies have shown that treatment programs are most effective – that is, they work best to reduce recidivism and use available resources most efficiently – when they follow the risk principle, or when the level of service provision is matched to each child’s risk level. Throughout the relevant research, adhering to the risk principle is shown to maximize both overall program efficacy and outcomes for individual children.

Effective juvenile justice practice matches the right intervention to a particular young person’s risk and needs. This requires adaptive tools and mechanisms like a local **Service Matrix** to comprehensively document the available resources in a community. Good case planning matches the youth and family with the best available resources for their risk, needs and goals. The development of the local Service Matrix additionally allows for the identification of system gaps; services that should be locally available for particular youths, but are currently not.

But a question remains: isn’t it better to estimate risk conservatively and err on the side of providing more children with more services? Aren’t interventions crafted to be beneficial to a wide variety of children, even those who are relatively low-risk? Doesn’t involvement in the juvenile system indicate *some* need for substantive intervention? The answer to all of these questions is a resounding no.

**The Risk Principle-** *(Excerpted from Edward Latessa- “Can treatment actually increase recidivism? Applying the Risk Principle to juvenile programming”.*

The risk principle was first formulated over half a century ago. Simply stated, the risk principle says that, “The level of supervision and treatment should be commensurate with the offender’s level of risk.” That is to say, low-risk youth should be provided with low-intensity treatment, and high-risk children should be provided with higher-intensity treatment.

How can this be? It is hard to imagine that providing services for court-involved youth could have negative outcomes; service provision seems as if it should be positive (or at least not actively detrimental) for all children, regardless of their risk level. But as the above research shows, and as an important large-scale study in Ohio conclusively depicted, adherence to the risk principle is not only vital to ensure that resources are appropriately prioritized, but also has an enormous effect on offender recidivism rates. Providing high-intensity interventions to low-risk offenders not only does not help, but does extensive damage to these youth’s outcomes.

Using the concepts of the Risk Principle, it becomes imperative to appropriately match services to a youth’s risk (and need), to achieve positive juvenile justice outcomes. Accordingly, sites are encouraged to develop some form of **Service Matrix**, to illustrate and guide their local matching process. The Service Matrix is a localized effort to articulate the range of available juvenile justice interventions, based on the articulation of risk and need for a given youth. The Service Matrix also provides a mechanism for identifying community programs and resources that can provide supports to youth and families after probation supervision is completed. Included in the tools section of this report are: A) A blank shell example of how to set up a Service Matrix using the same identified “need areas” as we have used in the case plan examples, and, B) an example of a standardized Service Matrix used by the State of Pennsylvania.

Cumulative data from hundreds of programs and dozens of meta-analyses show that not following the risk principle and placing low-risk youth in high-intensity programs leads to significant decreases in program effectiveness and to increased risk of recidivism. Low-risk youth not only do not need high-intensity interventions, but putting them in those programs dramatically increases their likelihood of recidivating.