



Dual System Youth-YRTC Placement

Juvenile Justice Certificate Capstone 2025

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Introduction

I chose the topic of Dual System Youth-YRTC Placement from the Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center (YRTC) for Dual system youth because this group faces some of the most complex challenges when it comes to reentry and long-term success. These young people are involved in both the juvenile justice and child welfare systems, which often means they lack stable support, consistent care, and clear direction once they leave facilities like the YRTC.

Transitional planning is crucial because it can be the difference between a young person who will re-entry into the community successfully or falling back into cycles of incarceration or instability. I wanted to explore how effective transitional planning can create a bridge to better outcomes—whether it's education, employment, housing, or mental health support.



YLC-Juvenile-Justice-Reentry-Checklist

This article provides guidance on 4 focus areas that can help create a comprehensive transition plan for youth. The areas include:

Why youth should be released from facilities- Youth thrive better in community-based settings, incarceration should be brief.

Pre-Release planning-Begin planning early, ideally at intake, develop a clear plan for release, including transportation, housing, education and immediate needs.

Transition Planning- Ensures a smooth handoff to life in the community, arrange mental health or substance use services if needed. Maintain continuity of care for the youth.

Ongoing Reentry Concerns- Provides sustained support

after release to encourage long-term success. Monitor progress and adjust plans as needed.



Transition Planning & Reentry

This article discusses Guiding Principles for Reentry-Focused Practice for all facilities and systems. These principles include viewing Facilities as part of a system, not standalone detention should be viewed as a continuum of care and support. Facilities (even short-term) must prioritize youth's reintegration in the community. Programs should focus on developing life, social and emotional skills. Transitions should be seamless, and reentry isn't a solo journey, families community members and other supports identified by the youth should be included in the reentry process. Youth should have individualized plans that will meet their own needs.

Outcomes

The purpose of this guidance is to ensure that field staff have a comprehensive understanding of the and roles when a dually adjudicated youth is placed at a Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center (YRTC). By starting transitional planning from Day 1 of placement, the process will be smoother, ensuring that the youth's needs are met, and they are appropriately prepared for returning into their community. Reentry isn't a solo journey- families and supports the youth identified should be included from the start.

When a dually adjudicated youth is placed at a YRTC, the Child and Family Services Specialist (CFSS) plays a

critical role in supporting the youth, coordinating services, and ensuring that all necessary steps are taken for successful re-entry. It is essential for CFSS to know the goals of their youth's treatment and rehabilitation.

Transitional planning should begin immediately upon placement to ensure that the youth is not caught off guard or underprepared when they receive their 60-day discharge notice. The earlier this planning starts, the more time there is for field staff to assess the youth's needs and begin making connections with community services.

By starting the transitional planning process early, field staff can ensure a smoother re-entry process for dually adjudicated youth at the YRTC. The guidance provided above outlines how CFSS can work effectively with the YRTC and probation, ultimately leading to more successful outcomes for the youth. With early and consistent involvement, the chances for successful reentry into the community are greatly improved, enhancing long-term well-being for the youth.

Project Design

At this time, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) does not have formalized guidance specifically designed for field staff working with Dual System Youth placed at Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Centers (YRTCs). In response to this gap, DHHS has developed a set of clearly defined roles and responsibilities to provide clarity during a youth's commitment to a YRTC. This guidance outlines accountability for coordinating services related to behavioral health, medical care, education, family team meetings, and visitation throughout the youth's placement.

A significant focus of the guidance is transitional planning. Field staff are encouraged to begin identifying and coordinating post-discharge placement options early—well before the 60-day discharge notice is issued—to ensure a smooth transition and continuity of care following the youth's release.

To support this effort, DHHS is in the process of finalizing field guidance for Child and Family Services Specialists (CFSS), along with a flow chart and a Quick Tip resource that highlights key steps in transitional

planning, particularly around identifying appropriate placement options. Feedback on these materials was gathered from Probation, YRTC leadership, Service Area Administrators, Deputy Director, and the Permanency Administrator.

The field guidance and supporting materials are currently in the final approval phase with upper leadership. Once approved, all CFSS staff statewide will have consistent direction on how to support dually adjudicated youth placed at YRTCs and the required steps to take throughout their commitment.

Conclusion

Importance of Clarity and Consistency- One of the biggest takeaways was the need for clear, step-by-step guidance. Field staff often have varying levels of experience and training, so it's crucial that the instructions and expectations are easy to follow and consistent across the service areas.

Cross-System Collaboration- dually adjudicated youth are involved in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems, the guidance had to address how to coordinate across probation, YRTC staff and DHHS Staff. This meant including joint responsibilities, shared timelines, and communication protocols.

Definitions: Dually Adjudicated youth- a youth who are actively involved in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems or are part of an active investigation in either system.

Dually-Adjudicated- Youth adjudicated pursuant to: (A) Neb. Rev. Stat. § 43-247 (3a) and/or (3c); and (B) Neb. Rev. Stat. § 43-247 (1), (2), (3b) and/or (4) petition; or Youth who are involved in a probation pre-disposition or child abuse and/or neglect investigation who have a juvenile justice or child welfare case closed within the last 2 years.