



A Blueprint for Successful Family-Based Diversion Programs

familybasedjusticecenter.org

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Executive Summary

This document presents a blueprint for the development and implementation of family-based diversion programs aimed at reducing the negative impacts of justice involvement on caregivers, their families, and communities. It describes approaches that prioritize family stability and community support over traditional punitive measures such as incarceration.

Key considerations for establishing effective diversion programs include:

- **Target Population and Eligibility:** Identifying the appropriate characteristics of program participants and establishing clear eligibility criteria.
- **Early Enrollment:** Encouraging early participation by streamlining the enrollment process to facilitate access.
- **Tailored Services:** Providing services that address the holistic needs of families, focusing on critical issues such as food and housing insecurity and on care centered on their individual needs.
- **Mandatory vs. Voluntary Services:** Clearly defining which services are mandatory, ensuring they are proportionate to the charges faced, and avoiding excessive requirements for low-level offenses.
- **Engagement and Trust:** Building trust between program providers and participants to create a supportive environment.
- **Family Involvement:** Allowing family members to engage voluntarily in the process, without fear of punitive repercussions.
- **Flexibility:** Balancing certainty in program expectations with the flexibility to accommodate individual circumstances.
- **Funding:** Seeking diverse funding sources and avoiding participant fees to eliminate barriers to access and alleviate financial burdens.

The collaborative involvement of stakeholders, including community organizations and service providers, is essential for the success of these programs. By addressing the underlying issues that contribute to criminal behavior while promoting accountability and public safety, family-based diversion programs can effectively support caregivers and foster healthier family dynamics.

Definitions

- **Caregiver:** For purposes of this document, a caregiver refers to a person who is responsible for the care of a child or family member and is facing criminal charges.
- **Confidentiality:** The principle that information about individual family members learned during the course of programming should not be shared with court actors without express consent from the family members, ensuring that families are not subjected to unnecessary entanglement in the family-court system.
- **Diversion:** Used in its broadest sense to encompass a wide range of community-based responses available to the justice system, including pre-arrest deflection, prosecutor-led pre-arraignment diversion, alternatives to pretrial detention, alternatives to conviction, and alternatives to incarceration post-conviction.
- **Family-Based Diversion Program:** A program designed to provide support and services to caregivers facing criminal charges while addressing the needs of their family members, aiming to stabilize families and promote constructive outcomes without replicating the child-welfare system.
- **Incentives/Benefits:** The advantages or rewards offered to caregivers for successfully completing a diversion program, which may include diversion from arrest, declined prosecution, or alternatives to incarceration.
- **Voluntary Services:** Services that are offered to families and caregivers that are not mandated but are encouraged based on the family's own assessment of their needs.

Overview

The traditional outcomes of local criminal justice systems—arrest; charging and prosecution; pretrial detention; criminal conviction; incarceration post-conviction; and even probation, fines, and fees—can take a heavy, often-overlooked, toll on parents and other primary caregivers¹ accused of a crime, as well their families and communities.

Given these long-lasting harms, a family-based justice approach that uses diversion and alternative sentencing can deliver accountability, proportionate outcomes, constructive clinical services, and enhanced public safety—while also stabilizing families and helping them thrive.

¹ Annie E. Casey Foundation. (2016). A shared sentence: The devastating toll of parental incarceration on kids, families and communities. aecf.org/resources/a-shared-sentence

Launching a diversion program for caregivers, regardless of if they are created by statute, requires a number of decisions about structure and protocols that can either deliver promised benefits and better outcomes or create more barriers and harms for participants and undermine a program's intent.

This paper aims to assist prosecutors, judges, defense attorneys, social-service programs, and government agencies in identifying critical considerations when developing or enhancing family-based diversion programs. It will help navigate potential pitfalls that can hinder a program's ability to effectively serve those most affected—caregivers, their children, and their communities—while avoiding unintended harms. To that end, after outlining the foundational features of family-based justice, this paper identifies key decisions and choices involved in structuring such a program, including the benefits and drawbacks of different options for protocols, policies, and practices.

The Problem: The Harmful Effect of Criminal Justice Involvement on Caregivers, Families, and Communities

The short- and long-term effects of separation due to incarceration can be devastating to caregivers and children alike. It can also create long-lasting detriments to the entire family and the extended community. It is well documented that children experience “a shared sentence,” when one or both of their parents are incarcerated.² System involvement, especially if it leads to incarceration, can cause serious physical, emotional, psychological, and economic harms to children, other adult family members, and extended communities, with Black, Brown, and Indigenous children bearing the disproportionate brunt of these harms.³ Children with system-involved caregivers may experience:

- psychological and cognitive problems, including depression, conflict with friends and caretakers, and anxiety;⁴
- mental-health problems, such as abandonment and insecure attachment to parents;⁵
- child-welfare involvement, including placement in foster care and termination of parental rights;⁶
- physical-health problems, including migraine headaches, asthma, and HIV/AIDS;
- behavioral problems, including aggression, delinquency, and poor performance in school

² Id.

³ Id.

⁴ Lee, R. D., Fang, X., & Luo, F. (2013). The impact of parental incarceration on the physical and mental health of young adults. *Pediatrics*, 131(4), e1188–e1195.

⁵ Murray, J., & Murray, L. (2010). Parental incarceration, attachment and child psychopathology. *Attachment & Human Development*, 12(4), 289–309.

⁶ Segal, L., Dawe, S., Nguyen, H., Dennison, S., Gnanamanickam, E. S., Bell, M., Spittal, M., Kinner, S. & Preen, D. B. (2023). Child protection system involvement in children of incarcerated mothers: A linked data study. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 139, 106126.

- (truancy, lower standardized-test scores, dropping out, suspension, and expulsion);⁷
- sex trafficking or abuse;⁸ and
- housing insecurity, poverty, and being uninsured.⁹

An Alternative: Family-Based Diversion Programs

Family-based diversion programs can mitigate the harms of family separation by keeping caregivers out of jail and prison and in children’s lives, with their families and in their communities, while offering supervision, services, and support to the entire family. These can include:

- substance-use and mental-health treatment;
- parenting-skills classes;
- vocational and educational programming;
- life-skills classes;
- stabilization services;
- peer and community support; and
- referrals and support for housing, food insecurity, education, childcare, and employment for the family.

While diversion programs can offer considerable and tangible benefits to caregivers and their families, it’s worth highlighting the substantial incentives they also provide for a system actor or stakeholder:

- **Diversion does justice:** A prosecutor or judge is charged with seeking and achieving justice, not maximal punishment. Diversion programs can deliver justice by offering a response to criminal behavior that is proportionate and constructive; holds caregivers accountable; and addresses the underlying issues that drive criminal behavior. When properly designed and implemented, diversion delivers justice, accountability, and public

⁷ Davis, L., & Shlafer, R.J. (2017). Substance use among youth with currently and formerly incarcerated parents. *Smith College Studies in Social Work*, 87(1), 43–58; Haskins, A. R. (2017). Paternal Incarceration and Children’s Schooling Contexts: Intersecting Inequalities of Educational Opportunity. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 674(1), 134–162.; Murray, J., Farrington, D. P., & Sekol, I. (2012). Children’s antisocial behavior, mental health, drug use, and educational performance after parental incarceration: A systematic review and meta-analysis. *Psychological Bulletin*, 138(2), 175–210; Van de Rakt, M., Murray, J., & Nieuzeerta, P. (2012). The long-term effects of paternal imprisonment on criminal trajectories of children. *Journal of Research in Crime and Delinquency*, 49(1), 81–108.

⁸ Turney, K. (2018). Adverse childhood experiences among children of incarcerated parents. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 89, 218–225.

⁹ Wildeman, C. (2014). Parental Incarceration, Child Homelessness, and the Invisible Consequences of Mass Imprisonment. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 651(1), 74–96.

safety.

- **Diversion builds legitimacy and trust:** Because crime victims view community-based responses as proportionate and not excessive, diversion can bolster the legitimacy and trust in which affected communities hold justice institutions and system actors.¹⁰
- **Diversion offers long-term system-cost savings:** The reduced reliance on confinement can deliver long-term cost savings from lower system (e.g., prison/jail) costs.
- **Diversion resolves the case:** Diversion can help ease unmanageable caseloads, especially when offered early in a criminal case, by resolving cases without time demands on a system actor that could include discovery, motion practice, hearings, and trial preparation.

Planning and Implementation Decisions: Avoiding Pitfalls, and Planning for Success

On its face, the promise of community-based diversion is immensely attractive—especially when compared to the family-disrupting traditional responses of justice systems, in particular, incarceration. But even well-intentioned, community-based mandates can pose dangers that can scare potential participants away from enrolling or even trigger harsh unintended harms for those who do participate.

Creating effective diversion programs requires planners to make important choices about policies, structure, protocols, and practice, including, as discussed below, the target population and eligibility requirements; the status of the case when the diversion would occur (such as before arrest or at sentencing); the nature, quality, intensity, and frequency of a program and the participant’s obligations; and the case outcome for successful completion as well as for failure.

1. The key players: Who’s leading the charge? Who’s part of the team?

The initiation of a family-based justice program can be spearheaded by any of a number of system actors or stakeholders including:

- judges;
- prosecutors;
- defense advocates;
- law enforcement;
- government agencies;
- community organizations;

¹⁰ Alliance for Safety and Justice. (2016). Crime survivors speak: The first-ever national survey of victims’ views on safety and justice. perma.cc/W4XWNQB8.

- service providers, such as non-profits; and
- behavioral- or medical-health entities.

However, to ensure that the family-based diversion program is not viewed as an extension of the justice system, it should also have a deep connection to the community it will serve. To incentivize participation, family-based diversion programs may be most effective when housed in community-based organizations rather than with government agencies like prosecutor's offices, probation, child welfare, tribal governments, or courts.

Regardless of which entity spearheads the initiative or houses it, for a program to get off the ground and then succeed, it must be anchored in a collaborative process that includes many different players, including people with lived expertise. No matter who leads, without the support of key actors, in particular criminal justice stakeholders, a program can be doomed to fail before it even gets started. Even when there is agreement at the beginning, it is critical to convene actors and stakeholders periodically to troubleshoot and ensure that the program continues to improve and meet its goals.

2. Target population: Whom is a diversion program seeking to help?

Planners need to identify the target population early on. A family-based diversion program ultimately seeks to help families who have caregivers involved in the justice system. But the program can adopt a broad or narrow approach to identifying its target population. A narrow approach might be to include only those who identify as mothers and have full custody of their children (in other words, primary caregivers), while a more expansive approach may be to target anyone with meaningful caregiving responsibilities (such as noncustodial parents, stepparents, grandparents, or, even, adult children or siblings of people in need of care). Some factors in determining whether to adopt a broad or narrow approach include capacity, funding, staffing, services, expertise, and desired impact.

One option would be to start with a smaller, discrete target population and, depending on capacity, build out programming to expand to new populations over time.

3. Eligibility: What other factors should be considered for eligibility?

Beyond answering the question of whom an initiative seeks to serve, planners must figure out a range of other eligibility requirements for the diversion program, as well. Eligibility decisions may include:

- the nature and severity of the charged or potentially charged offense;
- how serious, violent, or extensive is the person's prior criminal history;

- prior success/failure in diversion programs;
- age of affected children;
- stable housing;
- reliable contact information; and
- relationships with other family members.

In creating eligibility criteria, stakeholders should be aware that restricting eligibility to those who are facing low-level charges, have little-to-no criminal history, and have stable lives may undermine the goals of providing support and services to the people most in need and compromise the success of the program. Many diversion programs restrict eligibility so narrowly that they serve very few people and are inefficient.

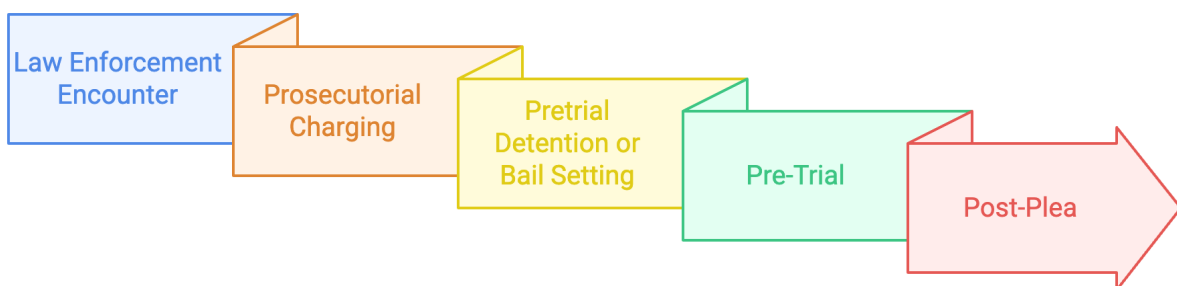
It's normal for a program to begin with limited eligibility as a way to work out kinks in the model and its protocols. But if the program intends to mitigate the harms of justice involvement to families, then the question of how to expand to serve more people should be asked repeatedly.

4. Justice system case process: When is the person diverted?

Diversion is often thought about as an alternative to an incarceration sentence. However, diversion can take many forms and can also be triggered at any point during the justice-system case process (see Figure), including:

- at the moment of enforcement/arrest;
- at the prosecutorial charging stage;
- at the determination of pretrial detention or the setting of bail;
- before any plea has been taken; and
- after a plea has been entered.

Justice System Case Process



In determining the right point to intervene, planners should consider the varied interests of the parties—including the caregiver and family—during the different stages of the case.

For example, the person facing criminal prosecution may have an interest in diversion at the earliest moment possible, before guilty plea, prosecution, and even arrest, to avoid the greatest harms imposed by justice-system involvement; while prosecutors may have an interest in diversion later in the process, after arrest, prosecution, and guilty plea, to ensure that there is a clear consequence for failure and so that if diversion is not successfully completed, they have already secured a guilty plea.

While diversion is often planned as an intervention at one point in time, a more comprehensive vision would establish opportunities for diversion at multiple stages depending on the circumstances of the person being diverted and the case, such as an alternative to arrest, to prosecution, to detention, and to conviction and incarceration. Such a model would enable more people to be served, across a spectrum of severity, rather than if it is limited to just one point in time.

5. Incentives/benefits: What's the deal?

When building a diversion program, planners must decide what kinds of incentives or benefits will be offered to the caregivers that can both encourage participation and motivate successful completion. Some potential benefits offered by family-based diversion programs include:

- diversion (or “deflection”) from arrest;
- decision to decline prosecution;
- alternative to detention;
- dismissal of the case;
- reduction of disposition charges;
- elimination of or reduction in fines or fees;
- alternative to sentenced incarceration; and
- reduced period of incarceration.

Ideally, a family-based diversion program would have enough flexibility to offer different incentives/benefits based on the specifics of the case and caregiver. For example, for a caregiver facing a low-level, nonviolent charge, the benefit/incentive might be diversion from arrest or a declined prosecution upon successful completion of the program while, for someone facing a more serious or violent case, the incentive/benefit might be an alternative to incarceration or reduction of disposition charges. One key factor is that, before agreeing to enter the program, caregivers must know what the benefit/incentive is if they successfully complete and what the outcome will be if they don't.

6. Timeline: How long does it take to enroll and to complete?

A critical, but undervalued, consideration for a diversion program is how long it takes to assess eligibility, approve or accept the candidate, enroll the person into the program, and start programming. A lengthy process for initiating programming can be a powerful disincentive for a caregiver to engage with the program. If a person would have completed or be close to completing their incarceration sentence by the time a diversion program accepts them into the program, the program will be limited in what kinds of benefits and incentives it can offer, reducing the likelihood that the caregiver will participate. Many diversion programs—especially those involving mental-health treatment—can have such extensive and thorough pre-program eligibility-assessment processes that they are a substantial disincentive for enrollment, and such programs suffer from low participation.

Similarly, if the prosecutor has had to file motions and engage in extensive litigation prior to enrollment, the benefits/incentives to the prosecutor may be limited as well. Programs should ensure that participants can start programming as early in the process as possible and that once offered, the process is as streamlined and quick as possible.

7. Services/programming: What services are you providing, how are you providing them, and which ones are mandatory?

The service provider, the model of programming, and the quality of services can determine the success of a diversion program. A family-based diversion program must meet the needs of participants and their families. To ensure that people are encouraged to enroll in and successfully complete the program, stakeholders should assess the needs of the caregiver and their family as well as how it can fill gaps in services. For example, a family referred for therapy may also have food or housing insecurity. To the extent possible, the program should try to meet the family's immediate needs by providing the necessary services or developing referral relationships with other community-based service providers.

While a program should offer a range of services and support directly or through referrals, not all services have to be or should be mandated. Instead, the program should assess early on which services are necessary to meet the goals of diversion and which are optional. Those services that are deemed necessary for successful completion of the program must be clearly communicated to the caregiver and agreed to before program participation begins. Once they are decided, the program should not move the goalposts by imposing additional mandated services that were not agreed to upfront.

When deciding which services will be required, as opposed to voluntary, one danger is tying intensity, frequency, and duration of mandated services to the clinical needs of the person,

without considering the weight or severity of the criminal charge. For someone with high needs but charged with a low-level offense, requiring intensive and extensive services may feel excessive to the caregiver and disproportionate to the charge. On the other hand, for someone charged with a serious, perhaps violent, offense, but otherwise stable, with low clinical needs, a minimal diversion intervention may feel inadequate to a victim or community and also disproportionately light compared to the charge. Given the additional stigma of violent crimes, it may be necessary to collaborate with restorative justice or other accountability processes to provide transparency and ensure cooperation from prosecutors and other decisionmakers who may be hesitant to use non-carceral responses to crime. Some recent research shows that victims want prevention.¹¹ Overall, understanding and navigating this balance can be critical to a program's success.

The service provider for the diversion program should serve as the gatekeeper for participants' programming and services. The prosecutor and court do not have the clinical or social-service expertise to make determinations of a caregiver's and family's needs or the best way to deliver them, and too much information-sharing about a caregiver or family's needs with system actors can provoke a criminal- or family-justice response—such as unwarranted involvement of child-protective services or unnecessarily heightened supervision. Allowing the program provider to make decisions about which services and supports are needed not only ensures that the participant's needs are being assessed by those with the necessary expertise, but also helps build trust between the provider and the participant, which is critical to the participant's willingness to engage in services and ultimate success in the program.

8. Frequency/intensity/duration: How often, how intense, and how extensive?

A successful diversion program should also ensure that the frequency of engagement and length of participation is no more than necessary to meet the goals of the diversion. If the intensity, frequency, or duration of a diversion program's obligations are too onerous, people may routinely fail to meet program expectations, leading to termination. Over time, defense counsel may discourage caregivers from enrolling in the program. At the same time, if the intensity, frequency, or duration are too mild, it may not feel like an appropriate alternative to incarceration in more serious cases.

9. Approach/mindset: How to create a family-centered approach?

A diversion program should not replicate the punitive orientation of the criminal justice system but instead be viewed by the participant as a resource and support. If it is too punitive, the

¹¹ Alliance for Safety and Justice. (2022). Crime survivors speak: National survey of victims' views on safety and justice. allianceforsafetyandjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Alliance-for-Safety-and-Justice-Crime-Survivors-Speak-September-2022.pdf

participant may be more resistant to services, less willing to engage with voluntary services, and at an increased risk for failure. Even when the program is designed to be supportive and non-punitive, those who are providing the services and engaging with the participant must understand the practical, financial, familial, and psychological challenges of participation and program completion. Some of these challenges may relate to transportation, childcare, education, and work obligations, while others may involve negative past experiences with service providers, mental health, emotional, or cognitive issues, and lack of trust. To mitigate, it is helpful for at least some programmatic staff to be familiar with the backgrounds and experiences of the majority of their participants.

It may also be helpful to remember that, as with restorative justice, just because these sentences/state actions are community-based and non-confinement-based doesn't mean that there is no accountability. Programs may want to consider including an element of reflection and opportunity to explore with the participant the impact of their acts or their justice involvement on victims, the community, and their family.

10. Engagement with family members: How to offer services and support without causing harm?

Family-based diversion programs are distinctive in that they are designed to meet the needs not just of the caregiver, but the caregiver's family members, as well. This may mean working with each family member to understand their needs and developing custom service plans for each family. However, it is important to remember that it is the caregiver who is facing criminal charges (and under the supervision of the state), *not* the caregiver's child/family. While the caregiver can be mandated to participate in certain services and programming, engagement by other family members, including children, is optional. A caregiver should not be subjected to sanctions or punishment for the unwillingness or inability of a family member to participate in programming.

But it is also important for the program to ensure that it is not replicating the child welfare system, which many caregivers see as antagonistic and threatening to their interests or increasing the family's exposure to child-protective services. One way to do so is by ensuring that the services offered are not only voluntary, but also driven by the family members' own assessment of their needs.

Finally, when building a family-based diversion program, stakeholders must consider and ensure that safeguards are in place to handle confidentiality. Information about individual family members learned in the course of programming should not be shared with court actors without express consent from the family members and should be done only when it does not subject the family to unnecessary entanglement in the family-court system. If circumstances arise that may

be interpreted as triggering mandatory reporting, program staff should consider what support can be provided to change those circumstances before subjecting a family to the substantial consequences of a report to the child welfare system.¹²

11. Certainty v. flexibility: Cookie-cutter predictability or individualized?

As noted, before committing to a program, caregivers should know clearly what services are mandatory as opposed to voluntary, what success and failure look like, and what the final disposition/sentence is in each instance. Some level of clarity and certainty is important to ensure that program participants understand what is expected of them. At the same time, there should be flexibility in the disposition/sentence options to accommodate different facts underlying the incident and participation in any program. Patience for noncompliance or setbacks, and understanding of complications, is critical. There should be room for flexibility and individualized approaches, depending on the person and circumstances.

12. Funding/costs: What it costs, how it gets paid for, and who should be responsible for the bill?

Funding and program costs are important considerations in the implementation of family-based diversion programs.

Program funding: The budget for a family-based diversion program, at first glance, may seem overwhelming. First, and foremost are the costs for service providers to coordinate and deliver programming to the caregiver or their family members, likely including referrals to address substantial social needs, such as housing, childcare, treatment for substance use disorders, mental-health counseling, educational support, and job training. Funding for service providers and services is available through the Family-Based Alternative Justice Program grants awarded by OJJDP. Additionally, third-party funding systems—Medicaid or other state-based funding sources—may fully or partially cover such services. Some social-service partners may already have available funding; others will need help fundraising, perhaps from state or local government or from philanthropies.

And always be on the lookout for new funding opportunities—such as a federal, state, or local grant solicitation; government money allocated for a purpose close to what the program is trying to achieve (for instance, to provide stabilizing services for at-risk families); or a private donor prioritizing the relevant issues (such as reducing incarceration, preserving families, or protecting children).

¹² Coleman, J. (2023, October 24). Our system for reporting child abuse is unethical. The Hastings Center. thehastingscenter.org/our-system-for-reporting-child-abuse-is-unethical; Torre, M. E. (2023, June 20). Mandatory reporting hasn't prevented child abuse. Could something else? *Time*. <https://time.com/6589854/mandatory-reporting-child-abuse-prevention>.

Rather than wait to get all funding in place, though, it's worth considering whether a program can be jump-started on a pilot basis without new funding. Demonstrating some level of success for even a few test cases can make an initiative much more attractive to possible funders.

Financial Burden: Participants should not bear the cost of services, programming, or testing while in the diversion program. Across the United States, many diversion programs charge participants—here, caregivers—fees for their participation. These fees can be unaffordable to the population such diversion programs seek to serve as people accused of crimes and predominantly poor—which is especially true for the caregivers participating in family-based alternative justice initiatives. Such program costs can restrict participation or, counterproductively, create unmanageable debts for participants, leading, in too many cases, to a vicious cycle of warrants or defaults for failure to pay; collateral consequences, such as a suspended driver's license or a compromised credit rating; or even jail sentences. What starts out as a program intended to support families ends up leaving them in a much worse position.

Some jurisdictions or agencies justify such fees as a revenue generator to pay for the costs of the program; others assert that participating in a program is a privilege and a cost to the state caused by the caregiver's crime, and they should therefore bear at least some of the cost. Or it may be justified as a way to ensure that the participant has some "skin in the game." In any case, the harms of participant fees should be very seriously weighed against any benefits they theoretically offer. It may take more effort to find non-participant sources of funds for a family-based diversion program, but it's almost certainly worth it.

Family-based alternative justice models that provide closely monitored social services can help stabilize families and deliver proportionate, and effective justice and accountability, without triggering a raft of cascading harms that often flow from traditional criminal-justice responses. But the decisions shaping a diversion's design, protocols, policies, and practices can determine whether the program will deliver success.

Family-Based Diversion Spotlight: The Dallas County (Alabama) Family Preservation Program

Funded through the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act's Family-Based Alternative Justice Program, this 24-month diversion program provides stabilization and family support services to parents and primary caregivers who are currently or at-risk of criminal justice system involvement. The program is voluntary and there is no cost to the participant. It provides stabilization and support services responsive to the needs of the parent or caregiver and their families to support healthy child development, provide opportunities to strengthen the family unit, and preserve the family to prevent children from entering foster care as a result of parental incarceration. The program aims to improve public safety through interventions that reduce the drivers of crime (e.g., unemployment, untreated substance use disorder) to reduce the parent or caregiver's likelihood of future involvement in the criminal justice system.

Target Population and Eligibility:

- 18 years or older
- Currently residing in Dallas County
- Biological parent, guardian with physical custody, step-parent with physical custody, adoptive parent, or expectant or pregnant parent

Disqualifying Factors:

- Sexual offense (previous or current)
- Pending felony charge involving a firearm, deadly weapon, or dangerous instrument

Enrollment:

Referrals are received from:

- Probation;
- Law enforcement;
- The district attorney;
- Defense counsel;
- The court;
- The Department of Human Resources;
- Family advocates;
- Law enforcement; and
- Community members.

Potential participants receive a human-needs, substance-use, and risk assessment to inform the program manager's presentation of the case and recommendation to the district attorney or judge.

Tailored Services:

When accepted into the program, case managers work closely with the parents and caregivers in the household and the children to build trust, further assess the challenges and needs of the family, and determine which services and programs in their network of partnerships are most appropriate to meet these needs. This includes services provided by state, county, and city government, to include schools, as well as nonprofit and faith-based organizations. Examples of these services include:

- Education and vocational training;
- Enrollment in public benefit programs;
- Medical, dental, and mental health services;
- Housing assistance; and
- Transportation assistance.

Case managers also provide direct service and assistance, to include:

- Supporting the parent or caregiver involved with the justice system in meeting their court or probation requirements;
- Paying fees and fines for drivers license reinstatement;
- Clearing old warrants;
- Sourcing clothing, household goods, and appliances (e.g., washing machine);
- Transportation;
- Avoiding eviction;
- Reinstating utilities or avoiding utility cut-offs;
- Obtaining paperwork necessary to enroll children in school;
- Enrolling children in tutoring and activities; and
- Other actions to strengthen the family's physical, mental, and financial health and help them make and achieve their goals.