



Sustaining the Gains: Alternative Tools to Isolation

Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators

639 Granite St. | Suite 112 |
Braintree, MA 02184
(P) 781.843.2663 | (F) 781.843.1688
www.cjca.net

Mission

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

Vision

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

Core Values

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

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In 2014, the Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators (CJCA) created the “Reducing the Use of Isolation: A Toolkit for Juvenile Correctional Administrators” in response to the national research indicating the negative impact isolation or room confinement has on youth in juvenile correctional facilities. The toolkit, grounded in best practices research, was developed as a guide for youth detention and corrections administrators in reducing the use of isolation. The toolkit provides a structured approach to effectively addressing the issue of isolation.

In 2015, additional grant funding from the Office of Juvenile Justice Delinquency and Prevention (OJJDP) allowed CCAS through its partner CJCA to develop a robust technical support program to reduce the use of isolation. This technical assistance (TA) program provided expert guidance on how to create sustainable change in agency culture to implement practices that reduce the use of isolation. The RIYF TA program involved eight jurisdictions participating in a series of webinars, group TA calls, and individual monthly calls over a ten-month period. Participating jurisdictions in the initial RIYF cohort included:

- California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Division of Juvenile Justice
- Georgia Department of Juvenile Justice
- Minnesota Department of Corrections, Red Wing Correctional Facility
- Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Juvenile Services
- Nevada Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Children and Family Services
- South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice
- Washington Juvenile Justice & Rehabilitation Administration, Green Hill School
- West Virginia Division of Juvenile Services



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The following document describes effective strategies for sustaining policies and practices that reduce the use of isolation. These best practices were synthesized from the jurisdictions participating in the first cohort. These sustainability recommendations consist of five main components: 1) Leadership Expectations and Acknowledgement; 2) Staff and Youth Engagement; 3) Infrastructure Development; 4) Training/ Professional Development; and 5) Quality Assurance and Ongoing Monitoring. These suggestions are intended to provide guidance to jurisdictions that are working to reduce the use of isolation by using alternative behavior management methods in their youth facilities.

1) Leadership Expectations and Acknowledgement

- Establish clear expectations for managers and, in particular, emphasize that all managers are responsible for coaching staff in order to help them become proficient in the use of alternative tools.
- Require all managers to participate in an annual training on effective methods for coaching staff who are not proficient in the use of alternative behavioral management tools.
- Use performance appraisals to support and encourage staff in becoming proficient by incorporating the use of alternative tools into formal staff performance appraisals and providing six-month reviews.
- Formally acknowledge all staff who resolve incidents without the use of isolation.
- Require facilities to review and discuss isolation data in monthly meetings at all levels (i.e. agency leadership, facility managers, all staff, etc.). Further support this expectation by requiring isolation data review to appear as a standing item on the monthly agenda.

2) Staff and Youth Engagement (creating “buy-in”)

- Expand the “tool box” by conducting periodic focus groups with youth and staff to gather additional ideas for alternatives to isolation. This should be done a minimum of once every six months.
- Broaden the number of effective reinforcers by conducting periodic focus groups with youth and staff to gather information on effective ways to motivate and support youth in treatment.

3) Infrastructure Development

- Create CARE (Crisis Awareness Response Effort) teams for effectively responding and handling youth in crisis, thereby avoiding the need for physical interventions and the use of isolation.
- Create sensory rooms* to provide youth support in using self-regulation skills and strategies prior to reaching a heightened emotional state.

* A sensory room is a special room designed to develop a person's sense, usually through special lighting, music, and objects. It can be used as a therapy for children with limited communication skills.

4) Training/ Professional Development

- Add formal training segments to new employee orientation related to the use of isolation. Examples include adolescent brain development, cognitive behavioral interventions, behavior modification and de-escalation, trauma informed care, crisis intervention, crisis resolution and management, administering rewards and consequences and motivational interviewing.
- Implement annual mandatory refresher trainings for all direct care staff on topics previously listed.
- Create an internal group of content experts in these mandatory trainings to support sustainability and increase consistency in training delivery.

5) Quality Assurance and Ongoing Monitoring

- Implement a monthly review of the RIYF action plan by agency and facility leadership to determine if strategies employed are proving effective and if any adjustments need to be made.
- Create a formal quality assurance system to monitor the use of alternative tools. This should include:
 - Monitor fidelity to treatment models and approaches (i.e. formal checklists and follow-up coaching to assist staff in developing the necessary skills.
 - Conduct formal audits or quality assurance checks of youth case plans a minimum of once per month to ensure case plans are individualized, that short and long term goals are tied to evidence-based interventions, and plans are aligned with using alternative behavior management tools.
 - Implement a skills proficiency component for new employees. This would require staff to demonstrate the proper use of alternative behavioral management tools and treatment approaches. This process should also be a part of annual refresher training for all staff.
 - Regularly review custom reports that provide information on the use of alternatives. Review incident videos in monthly team meetings to discuss what went well and areas for improvement with regard to using alternatives.

A copy of this brief can be found on the CJCA website <http://cjca.net> under the Resources section and on the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's Online University at <http://www.nttac.org/index.cfm?event=trainingCenter.Homepage>. For more information about the RIYF contact Ned Loughran, Executive Director, CJCA or the RIYF Project Manager Sharon Pette at sharon.rapidesi.com