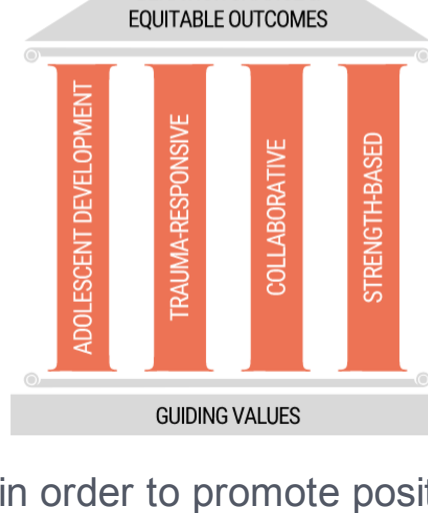




The National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges and the National Center for Juvenile Justice recently updated the Desktop Guide to Good Juvenile Probation Practice, which was originally published in 1991 and updated in 2002. This third iteration of the Guide is a web-based resource that includes evidence-based practices, information from those in the field, a section devoted to special considerations for certain youth populations, and much more.



A New Vision for Juvenile Probation

The updated [Desktop Guide](#) lays out a new vision for juvenile probation rooted in four pillars that give youth the foundation and tools that enable them to handle the circumstances in their environment that will lead to success. Years of work from professionals in the field have taught us that

in order to promote positive behavior change in youth that are placed on probation, we must use approaches that are informed by the science of **adolescent development**, are **trauma-responsive**, **collaborative**, and **strength-based**.

Adolescent Development

Research suggests the human brain continues to develop throughout adolescence until approximately 30 years old. Youth need support to promote healthy brain and positive behavior development. It is imperative to treat all youth as though their brain is still maturing and help promote their engagement in positive activities and experiences to help promote normal brain development. For most youth, behavior incidents that come to the attention of public safety professionals will be status offenses or low level non-violent misdemeanors. These youth should be diverted from the juvenile justice system.

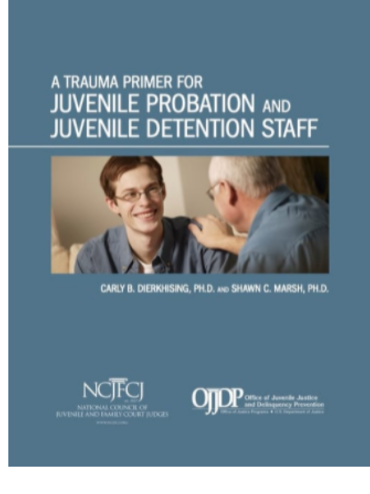
- **Help** youth understand the reason they are on probation and the consequences of the actions. This does not mean reminding youth about their bad behavior but explaining the ripple effect of their actions.
- **Help** youth understand what is expected of them on probation and what responses they can receive by both achieving their goals and not completing their goals.
- **Help** youth create positive, short-term goals that result in behaviors that help them fulfill their probation requirements and achieve long-term success.
- **Create** an incentive program to respond to youth who are making progress. Incentivizing good behavior is a more effective approach to modifying behaviors because the brain prioritizes immediate rewards.
- **Provide** opportunities for positive youth development activities that are of interest to youth and expose them to positive peers.
- **Create** graduated responses to behaviors that are non-compliant so that youth can learn from their negative behavior and make positive changes



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Trauma Responsive

Helping youth and families access services to appropriately process and cope with traumatic experiences is vital to helping them make long-term positive behavior changes. In order to best serve families and youth, JPOs should ensure that their practices are trauma-responsive. Trauma-responsive practices take traumatic experiences and their consequences into consideration when making decisions and providing services.



- **Ensure** that there are resources available to families and providers that explain trauma and its effects.
- **Screen** for trauma and refer youth to a mental health provider for a full assessment when indicated.
- **Focus** on strengthening protective factors of youth and families. Design case plans with youth and family. The goals set in the case plan should encourage youth to use their strengths.
- **Acknowledge** that parents and caregivers may have their own trauma histories. Refer families to resources and treatment providers to help address trauma.

Collaborative

Behavioral problems that go beyond “normal adolescent behavior” are the result of a variety of experiences with the societal systems in a person's life, such as their involvement with the healthcare system, the school system, and other systems prevalent in their lives. The other systems present in a youth's life need to be involved in promoting long term success. Without effective collaboration, a JPO doing everything right will likely be unable to help a youth get back on track. However, a probation officer facilitating positive connections to family, school, and the community with the help of other professionals is likely to see that change. Probation officers wear many hats, but they cannot and should not be tasked to help youth alone.

Families and caregivers are critical partners, and their engagement is crucial both in day-to-day case planning and during a change effort. Successful family engagement includes:

- **treating** families with dignity and respect,
- **providing** opportunities for peer-to-peer support,
- **developing** partnerships between service professionals and families,
- **facilitating** information-sharing between agency personnel and families, and
- **building** relationships to promote sustained participation.

Strength-Based

Traditionally, approaches to helping youth in the juvenile justice system have been deficit-based, assessing a youth's risks and needs, trying to rehabilitate them, and otherwise improving them. This approach, while well-intentioned, inherently ignores the already existing potential and ability of youth to improve with positive approaches. Strength-based juvenile probation supervision emphasizes the strengths (abilities, skills, interests, and protective factors) of each youth, family, and community to help youth make long-term positive behavior changes.

For example, a deficit-based approach to juvenile justice isolates youth from communities with a large focus on professionals, programs, and institutional responses to youth and often views families as part of the problem. In contrast, a strength based approach connects youth to communities with a balanced focus on public safety and building relationships between youth, families, and the community to which they will return and views families as a resource and partner to the youth's success.

By changing the way you talk to, about, and around youth involved in the juvenile justice system, you can play an integral role in shifting the field toward a more strength-based approach. The words you use can help shape the attitudes of those around you to fit a more rehabilitative model.

Traditionally Used	Alternative
Juvenile delinquent/offender	Youth
Homeless	In need of shelter
Victim(s)	Harmed Party(ies)

Guiding Values

In addition to the four pillars, the Guide identifies Guiding Values that are the foundation of good juvenile probation practices. These values, paired with practices aligned with the four pillars, help ensure positive outcomes for youth.

Juvenile probation should be rooted in best practices to promote long-term success. Juvenile probation should use research as a foundation for effective administration of their practice.	Individualize juvenile probation Juvenile probation should respect a youth's individuality and focus on their identified strengths, risks, and needs to identify and provide appropriate services that empower the youth and their families.
Juvenile Probation should commit to equity with policy and action. Juvenile probation should ensure access to opportunities and supports for pro-social development to all youth regardless of their sex, race, ethnicity, language, culture, Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Gender Expression (SOGIE) status, abilities, and socioeconomic status.	Juvenile probation should use the least restrictive responses possible. Juvenile probation should strive to hold youth responsible for the harm caused by their law violating behavior by providing interventions that meet their needs and employ their strengths, even if that means diverting to services or refraining from submitting a violation of probation for behaviors that do not constitute a new offense..
Juvenile probation should hold itself accountable. Juvenile probation should be transparent to the community about their purpose, practices, and outcomes. They should collect and analyze data, including qualitative data from youth and families, to measure and report their outcomes.	Juvenile probation should ensure community safety. By using research-informed practices to treat the criminogenic needs of youth, probation professionals will more effectively promote community safety and put youth on a path toward long-term success. This requires developing realistic and appropriate goals for youth on probation and holding youth accountable in developmentally appropriate ways for missteps and setbacks, as well as new offenses while under supervision.

Explore the Guide

The Desktop Guide includes guidance on important areas of juvenile probation practice including:

- [Equity in practice](#)
- [Limiting system involvement](#)
- [Case management](#)
- [Effective responses](#)
- [Role of detention](#)
- [Organizational culture and development](#)

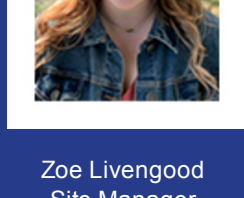
The Desktop Guide to Good Juvenile Probation Practice was developed by the National Center for Juvenile Justice, the research division of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, with funding from the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

We are eager to hear from you!

Contact us to learn more about how the Nevada Center for Juvenile Justice Innovation (NCJJI) can help you. Feel free to share this email with other juvenile justice stakeholders in Nevada. If you would like to add your email to our distribution list, contact Andrew below.



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