March **2019**

PLACE MATTERS

Aligning Investments in a Community-Based Continuum of Care for Maine Youth Transitioning to Adulthood

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ABOUT

The Place Matters Project

The goal of the Place Matters project is to translate data, knowledge, and best practices into sustainable solutions that are responsive to locally identified assets so that all transition aged youth (14-24) in Maine thrive into adulthood.

The Place Matters team includes a mix of researchers, policy advisors, data visualization experts, and directly impacted youth who collaborate to develop capacity for results focused, data-informed solutions to social and justice policy issues in Maine. The Place Matters project is housed at the Justice Policy Program within the Cutler Institute, at the University of Southern Maine's Muskie School of Public Service and is supported by a collective of funders including: The John T. Gorman Foundation, The Annie E. Casey Foundation, The Rocking Moon Foundation, the Maine Juvenile Justice Advisory Group, and the Maine Economic Improvement Fund. Place Matters staff work collaboratively using mixed methods and participatory processes that integrate the best available quantitative data with local voices.

Our Three Core Values

SYSTEM INNOVATION
We are committed to working towards universal goals and targeted reinvestment into a community-based continuum of care based on analysis of underlying indicators of economic and social well-being.

DATA RESOURCES
We are informed by and accountable to the best available data across systems and communities, including the underlying factors and forces of place that shape outcomes.

COMMUNITY INCLUSION
We engage and activate community assets and accountability in local problem solving and adaptation.

For more information or to work with the Place Matters project, please visit:
justicepolicyprogr.wixsite.com/imagineanewfuture/place-matters

CONTENTS

6 Introduction

8 An Aligned Continuum of Care for Transition-Aged Youth

12 Promising Community-Based Programs

14 Building a Continuum of Care for Transition-Aged Youth in Maine

24 Conclusion

26 Acknowledgements

28 References

Introduction

THE TIME IS NOW

In 2019 and beyond, Maine policymakers will make decisions about how to support Maine's youth, families, and communities. Youth involved in the justice or child welfare system that are transitioning to adulthood (ages 14 to 25) are a particularly vulnerable and underserved population. Approximately fourteen thousand[1] young people in Maine between the ages of 16 and 24 are disconnected from school and unemployed, and roughly three thousand of these youth will face homelessness or will return to communities from out-of-home treatment, confinement, or multi-system involvement ranging from days to years.[2] At eighteen, some face a chasm of service availability as they age out of child-serving systems and programs. Those who have criminal records as a result of their justice system involvement face additional barriers to employment, education, and other opportunities.[3] This is compounded by persistent opportunity gaps experienced by youth of color, girls, LGBT and gender nonconforming youth.[4,5] Strategies and policies that are neutral regarding race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and gender identity and expression fail to address these disparities.

"With so many young people at Long Creek, with children waiting for critical mental health services and some even losing their lives to violence in their own homes, it is high time we put children's health and safety first."

—GOVERNOR JANET MILLS

Presently, twelve percent of Maine's children under the age of 18 are growing up in poverty and hunger.[6] Many young people are experiencing housing insecurity, substance use, domestic violence, and trauma. Inconsistently available community-based interventions and supports, especially in rural areas, are exacerbated by state reductions in services[7] and fluctuating government contributions to the safety net.[8]

For decades, assessments of both the corrections and health and human services systems have reached the same conclusion: community-based services in Maine have been under resourced and underfunded.[9,10,11] Recommendations consistently point to needed investments in community-based services for youth and families. This is because place matters, especially in how Maine targets its investments in certain communities. It matters for youth, it matters for families, it matters for communities and it matters for the persistence of those places.

An Aligned Continuum of Care for Transition-Aged[12] Youth

PUT THE WELL-BEING OF YOUTH & FAMILIES IN THE CENTER

Investments in a continuum of care must include an examination of the values, attitudes, and beliefs that guide policy, program design, and implementation. Maine can redesign its systems of care to respond to the current needs of Maine's sixteen counties and diverse communities through research, collaboration, inclusion of directly impacted voices, effective leadership, and building upon past successes.

"We are failing as a state to protect our children. ... We shouldn't be waiting for the next horrific news report to hit—whether through the court process or through the legislature, real oversight is needed now."

—SARA GIDEON, *Maine House of Representatives*

The authors propose a continuum of care that puts communities at the center, rather than focusing on the inclusionary (or exclusionary) criteria of one agency, system, or program. The proposed continuum includes the following categories: prevention, early intervention, intervention, intensive intervention, out-of-home treatment, and reintegration. These categories are based on national examples of systems of care and consultation with local and national experts. The United States Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) designated each of the program examples included on the following pages as "effective." **Of the more than 500 programs assessed by the OJJDP, the model programs designated as such were all either family or community based.**[13] It should be acknowledged that the effectiveness of these programs has not been established for all populations, such as those defined by race, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation, and that definitions of family and community vary across subpopulations. There are a number of promising programs targeting specific populations, but resources are typically lacking for the evaluation work that is required in order for a program to be considered evidence based. Maine's efforts to study the effectiveness of programs on these populations has been further hindered by the small number of subjects available in any given study. That being said, the programs included in the graphic to follow have demonstrated promising outcomes for the general youth population, and these approaches could be replicated in Maine.

Maine has an opportunity to contribute to the development of national best practices with its own expertise. The availability of cost-effective, community-based, and rigorously evaluated services in every section of the continuum increases the probability that youth will thrive in their communities during and after receiving services and be more likely to succeed as they transition to adulthood. Optimally, investments will ensure consistent access to youth services that are close to home, have efficacy, and match every level of need within Maine counties and local communities. **Matching youth need with the appropriate intervention can prevent further harm and increase positive outcomes.**[14]

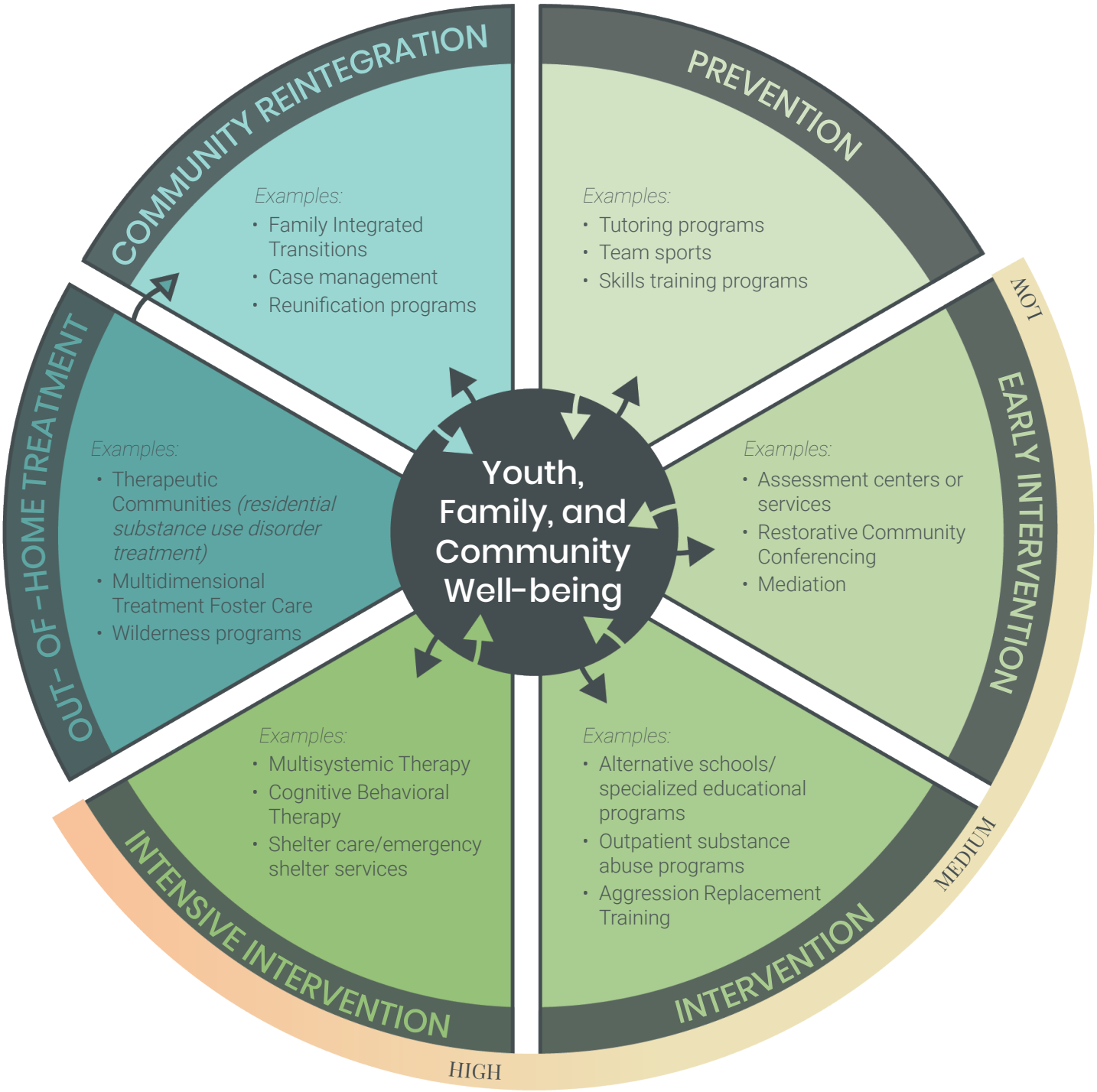
Maine is not alone in pivoting away from overreliance on residential, institutional, and carceral models. Other states are also grappling with how to best support youth, families, and communities. Investments in community-based resources are important regardless of a program's target age demographic, but there is universal agreement that adolescence and young adulthood is a time of critical brain development and identity formation. Though the benefits of targeted programs for children younger than fourteen cannot be overstated, the proposed continuum to follow focuses on the needs of older adolescent youth, ages 14-25.

"Systems and services are most effective when they put youth at the center of planning for their future, setting goals they want to achieve, and being engaged in defining the services, supports and opportunities they need to succeed."

—From ADOLESCENCE TO ADULTHOOD: *A Blueprint for Helping Maine's Youth Succeed.*

CONTINUUM OF CARE FOR COMMUNITIES

A supported community would have a range of evidence-based and data-informed services for youth.



PREVENTION

Prevention services are interventions, programs, or resources that increase protective factors or decrease risk factors for youth. Prevention is also referred to as *education* or *promotion* in some systems of care. Services that integrate best practices concerning both risk and protective factors have been found to be effective at preventing system involvement for at risk youth.[1] Prevention services that provide opportunities for youth to build new skills, abilities, or competencies, and/or facilitate high quality relationships with caring, responsible adults or prosocial peers are more effective.[2] ***Prevention services shown to be effective include (but are not limited to):*** *tutoring programs,[3] team sports,[4] violence prevention programs,[5,6] youth leadership training,[7] and mentoring.[8,9]*

EARLY INTERVENTION

Early intervention, also referred to as *assessment*, *identification*, or *pre-intervention* services, are services intended to actively involve youth and their families to prevent risky behavior or system involvement and mostly occur as a result to a young person's initial contact with a system. ***Early intervention services shown to be effective include (but are not limited to):*** assessment centers[10] or services,[11,12] Restorative Community Conferencing,[13,14] mediation,[15] and parent training.[16,17,18,19]

INTERVENTION

Intervention services are services that engage youth and their families as a result of a young person's contact with a system. Community-based intervention services may divert youth from a more punitive or restrictive process. ***Community-based intervention services shown to be effective include (but are not limited to):*** alternative schools/specialized educational programs,[20,21] outpatient substance abuse programs,[22,23] Aggression Replacement Training,[24] Functional Family Therapy,[25] family drug courts,[26] and juvenile drug courts.[27]

INTENSIVE INTERVENTION

Intensive intervention, also referred to as *crisis services* in other systems of care, are services for youth who have demonstrated a critical need for a high level of care. These services are more effective when provided within a young person's community. ***Intensive intervention services shown to be effective include (but are not limited to):*** Multisystemic Therapy,[28,29] Cognitive Behavioral Therapy,[30,31] shelter care/emergency shelter services,[32] Wraparound Multidimensional Family Therapy,[33,34,35] and day treatment.[36]

OUT-OF-HOME TREATMENT

Out-of-home treatment services, or *secure care,* are services for youth who have demonstrated a critical need for a high level of care in a secure location. ***Out-of-home treatment services shown to be effective include (but are not limited to):*** *Therapeutic Communities[37] (residential substance use disorder treatment) and Multidimensional Treatment Foster Care.[38]*

COMMUNITY REINTEGRATION

Community reintegration services, also referred to as *transition*, *recovery support,* or *reentry services* in other systems of care, are services that provide youth with the supports needed to decrease their level of system involvement. ***Transition services shown to be effective include (but are not limited to):*** Family Integrated Transitions,[39] case management,[40] and reunification programs.[41]

Categories for the graphic used in this report were refined through analysis of multiple national examples of systems of care, continuum of care graphics, and thought partnership with several youth-serving system stakeholders within the state of Maine.

The example programs included in this graphic have been evaluated and are considered evidence based. This report is the first of a series that will feature specific recommendations for how such programs and services can support social and economic well-being in Maine communities.

Promising Community-Based Programs

MODELS FOR MAINE

Maine has an opportunity to adopt national models and contribute to emerging best practices in policies and programs. The following are some best and promising practices for effective community-based programs for transition-aged youth that can inform a continuum of care for Maine.

"The system we need is a system of love—a network of people who all have love in their mind first."

—GABE, *Justice Policy Program Intern*

Youth Advocate Programs (YAP)[15] is a national organization that provides multiple categories of services including intensive intervention to youth and families in their communities at sites all over the country. YAP employs a highly adaptive, specialized model which includes braided services, advocacy and community support that balances youth and family needs with any goals or demands set at the state level. YAP's experience designing programming for rural and urban areas makes them a potential thought partner that can target subpopulations of youth.

ROCA[16] is an intervention model from Massachusetts for high-risk 17- to 24-year-old male-identifying youth that includes skill development, behavior change, and job placement. This is a four-year program that seeks to reduce participants' incarceration rates and increase participants' ability to retain employment over time.

Resilience, Opportunity, Safety, Education, Strength (ROSES)[17] is an intensive intervention, community-based programmatic model from New York. This model focuses on high-risk female-identifying youth and pairs them with advocate mentors for support with skill building, resource access, goal setting, and system navigation.

Transformative Mentoring or Credible Messenger Mentoring[18] is an early intervention model that seeks to transform the mentality and behavior of the most at-risk or hardest-to-reach youth. The model centers around the pairing of youth with specially trained adults who have had relevant life experiences, called *credible messengers*. These mentors, who have passed through systems and sustainably transformed their lives, are able to share their backgrounds and build connections with youth.

Elements of Effective Community-Based Programs:

- Accept all kids and adopt "no reject" policies
- Be available, accessible & flexible
- Empower voice, choice & ownership
- Individualize services for each youth
- Ensure family-focused services and respect for chosen families
- Take a strength-based approach
- Provide culturally competent services
- Engage youth in work
- Prioritize safety and crisis planning
- Provide unconditional caring ("no eject" policies)
- Create opportunities for civic engagement and giving back
- Cultivate long-term connection to community

Safely Home (June 2014)

Building a Continuum of Care for Transition-Aged Youth in Maine

SIX RECOMMENDATIONS FOR MAINE

National policy experts have established guiding principles for developing a youth-focused continuum of care (see box).

Guiding Principles

To build a continuum of such services and ensure its success:

1. Promote positive youth justice/development and an increased sense of relatedness for young people.
2. Define public safety as more than law enforcement.
3. Shift from a slot-based system to a needs-based system.
4. Provide services that are culturally competent, neighborhood-based, and responsive to gender, LGBTQ and gender non conforming youth.
5. Ensure that services, programs and resources are family-centered.
6. Include young people's ideas when creating the continua.
7. Identify community strengths and assets.

SOURCE: *National Collaboration for Youth. (2016). Beyond Bars: Keeping Young People Safe at Home and Out of Youth Prisons. National Human Services Assembly.*

We propose to build on these seven principles with the following six recommendations for Maine:

ALIGN RESULTS

Commit to aligned action that measurably improves positive youth outcomes for transition -aged youth.

AUTHORIZE LEADERSHIP

Recommit to a leadership body that shares accountability across systems to aligned youth results.

ASSESS CONTINOUSLY

Identify community assets, needs, and opportunities for investment.

ACCEPT INCLUSION

Create opportunities for those with lived experiences to participate in building solutions.

ALLOCATE RESOURCES

Invest in strategies that focus on common measures of success.

ACT STRATEGICALLY

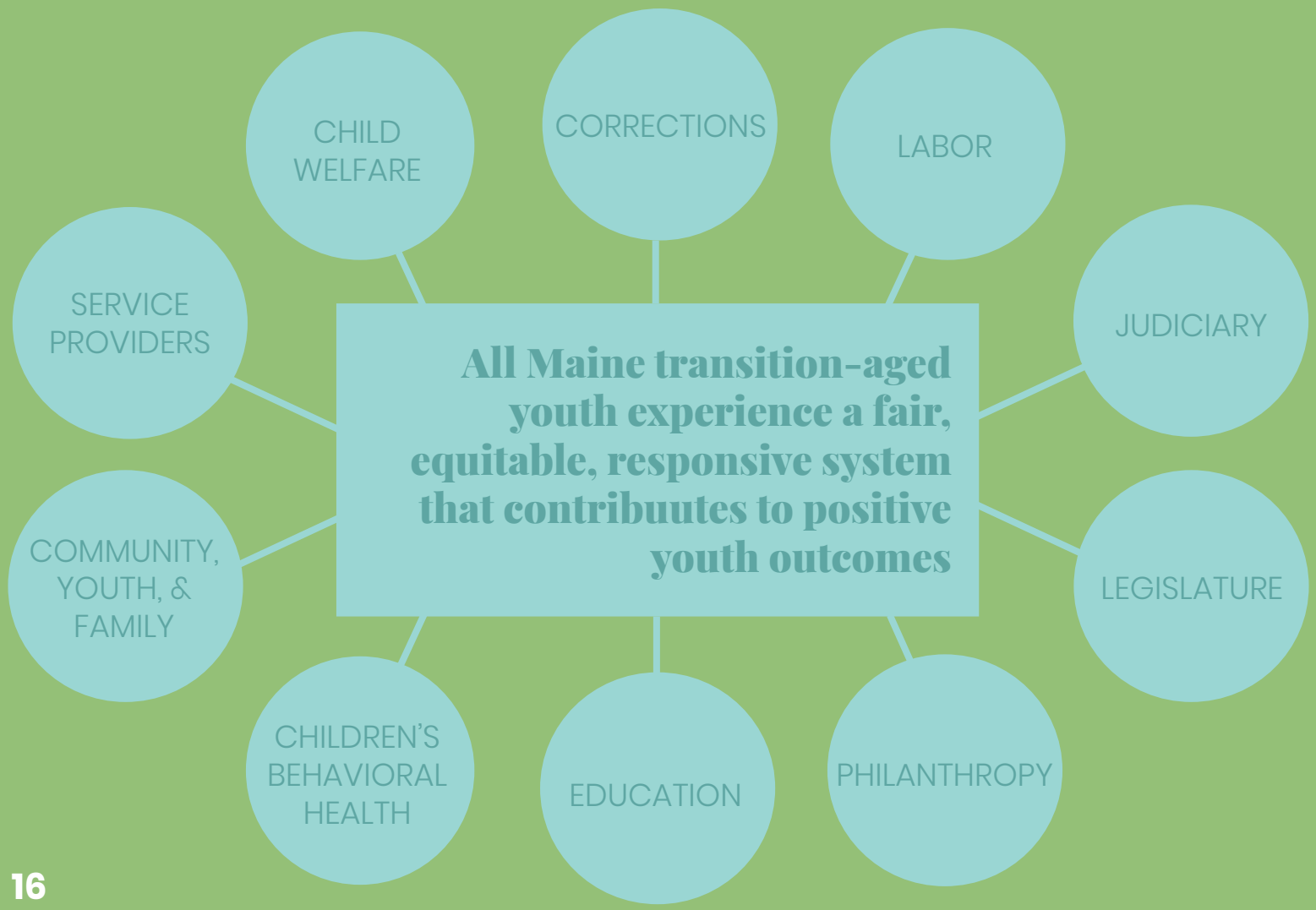
Prioritize reinvestment in community-based interventions and capacity building.

ALIGN RESULTS

Commit to aligned action that measurably improves positive youth outcomes for transition-aged youth.

Youth outcomes are the result of the contributions of multiple agents: parents, communities, schools, and local and state organizations. They are not the responsibility of one public system or organization. Stakeholders must recommit to working toward shared and measurable results that reflect a number of contributions. Each system must also be accountable for its contribution to those outcomes among its own system/program population.

Collaboration must include setting universal goals and targeted strategies, identifying shared performance measures, and making a commitment to aligned action. There are several organizations in Maine that have adopted or are starting to implement such a framework.[19]



AUTHORIZE LEADERSHIP

Recommit to a leadership body that shares accountability across systems to aligned youth results.

Aligned results will fail without leadership. Without shared governance across the various state agencies that serve youth and families, systems devolve into siloes in their attempts to address symptoms, too often overlooking root causes.

Maine must recommit to a governance structure responsible for ensuring a comprehensive, coordinated implementation process that eradicates barriers, develops data informed decisions, and creates opportunities for regular community dialogue and input.

Children's Cabinets also known as *interagency councils* or *commissions*, are typically made up of the heads of all government agencies with child- and youth-serving programs. Members meet regularly to coordinate services, develop a common set of outcomes, and collaboratively decide upon and implement plans to foster the well-being of children, youth and families.[20]

Task Forces can be established by governors and are generally time-limited with clear duties and goals.[21] Task forces can also be established by legislatures to study issues and make recommendations.

There are indications that the return of the Children's Cabinet may be on the horizon and several proposals have been made to establish legislative task forces or commissions to recommend changes to youth serving systems.[22] These efforts are important steps towards supporting the successful implementation of a continuum of care for youth transitioning to adulthood.

The Maine Children's Cabinet

The Maine Children's Cabinet was established in 1995 to promote interdepartmental collaboration on children's policy development and program implementation and to support the provision of services for Maine families and children that are planned, managed, and delivered in a holistic and integrated manner to improve their self-sufficiency, safety, economic stability, health, and quality of life.

– Title 5, Ch.439 § 19131

ASSESS CONTINOUSLY

Identify community assets, needs, and opportunities for investment.

To understand where and how to best direct investments to create an effective continuum of care at the county level, it is necessary to be informed about the current landscape of community assets, needs, and opportunities. The following methods are examples of how Maine could gather this information, including some which are currently underway.

> "What I've experienced in Maine – homelessness and other issues – I think other youth shouldn't have to experience that. I came to this state not knowing much, and with limited options and limited resources, I was set up for failure."
>
> —JP, *Justice Policy Program Intern*

Community Asset Mapping is a strength-based approach to gathering information about community resources to guide solutions within that community. The idea is that every community or place has positive elements, whether they be programs, institutions, organizations, or people.[23]

A community asset-mapping project focused on the assets that exist in each community to serve transition-aged youth is already underway in Maine.[24] **This Place Matters report is the first in a planned series that will identify where assets currently exist and where opportunities for investment lie across the state, informed by youth, families, service providers, and other stakeholders who live and/or work in those places.**

System and Facility Assessments examine the policies and practices of facilities, agencies, and departments; review the array of services and programs being funded; determine what is effective; and identify where there are gaps. Assessments can include budgeting tools like forecasting, which predicts budgetary and resource needs by analyzing historical trends and making data-informed predictions that also take into consideration the input of relevant stakeholders.[25]

Some of this work has been done in Maine,[26,27] but to ensure system efficacy and success, it must be more than a one-time exercise and become a regular practice.

Infrastructure Valuation calculates the hard assets at a state's disposal, such as state-owned facilities, land, and equipment. Taking Inventory of existing facilities, their value, and rules around their use would provide a greater picture of the full cost of the services provided at that site. Furthermore, it may increase the potential to use these assets more effectively. For example, understanding the value of the facility and property surrounding the Long Creek Youth Development Center would provide a more accurate picture of the cost of that facility and inform how to best leverage that physical asset.

ACCEPT INCLUSION

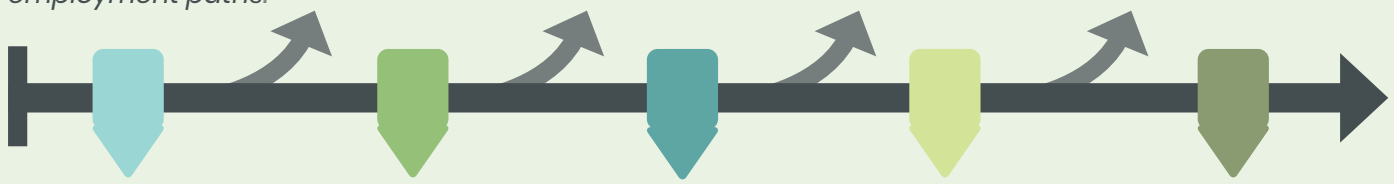
Create opportunities for those with lived experiences to participate in building solutions.

All Maine organizations should strive to include the voices of those directly impacted by their services, from the lowest level of engagement (e.g., community conversations) to the highest level possible (e.g., supporting directly impacted people in attaining leadership positions). Organizations that serve transition-aged youth must engage transition-aged youth in that work, to benefit the youth, the work, and the community at large.

One method that has worked well in Connecticut and Virginia with justice system-involved youth has been the use of youth visioning sessions.[28,29] During these visioning sessions, youth and community members answered a basic question: *What do young people need in their communities to be successful?* Participants walked through a floor map of the youth justice system to discuss what community-based interventions are needed to prevent young people from being pulled deeper into the justice system. These visioning sessions resulted in rich discussions about community reinvestment, alternatives to incarceration and the role that communities can play in supporting young people and their families.

Pathways

At any point on this pathway, participants may choose to pursue further education or alternative employment paths.



ASSOCIATES	AFFILIATES	INTERNS	FELLOWS	STAFF
Intermittent or one-time paid opportunities to attend training, serve on panels, or participate in other engagement	Scheduled, regular, or repeated paid opportunities to contribute	Scheduled work on funded research, policy, and system transformation projects	Cohort based, leadership program	Competitve hire into direct staff positions
Per Diem	Stipends	Paid Internship	Funded Fellow	Paid Staff

The Justice Policy Program is currently building pathways to opportunity for directly impacted individuals with an internship program launched in the summer of 2018 that engages young people with lived experience of systems in justice policy research.

ALLOCATE RESOURCES

Invest in strategies that focus on common measures of success.

Federal Funding Opportunities

Changes in law or policy may be needed to access or maximize federal funding streams. Federal funding opportunities that can be targeted include:

- Juvenile justice funding through the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDPA)
- Child welfare funding under Title IV-E, the Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) and the Family Services Act
- Medicaid funding and waivers, including Section 1115 waivers and Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) waivers
- Workforce and education grants, including the Workforce Investment Opportunity Act (WOIA)

Budgets are moral documents that represent our values. Decisions about how public and private dollars are invested help shape the infrastructure of our communities and play a significant role in people's lives.

State and local budgets must shift away from reliance on deficit metrics like recidivism reduction, school absenteeism, and abstention from substance use as indicators for success. The absence of negative outcomes does not ensure positive ones and tells an incomplete story about the efficacy of the investment. Data collection must also be transparent and publicly accessible to allow communities to have the information to either help themselves or be partners with state and local government in finding solutions.

Future data and evaluation resources should focus on ongoing performance measurement. The community must guide this process to ensure it is adequately informed and outcome driven.

ACT STRATEGICALLY

Prioritize reinvestment in community-based interventions and capacity building.

National studies within both child welfare and youth justice services show that children have better outcomes with home and community-based services[30,31,32] at a fraction of the cost.[33] These studies recommend maximizing individualized, family-centered, community-based, and data-informed interventions over out-of-home placement.[34,35] National research increasingly supports the closure of facilities and reinvestment into a continuum of community-based, developmentally appropriate programs that include some limited secure options for the very few young people who require such intervention.[36,37] This research aligns with the appeals to increase alternatives to confinement in Maine,[38,39,40,41,42] especially as the population at Long Creek Youth Development Center, the only remaining juvenile facility, dwindles.[43] Interest in building new secure care facilities that focus on mental health treatment for youth is not unexpected given the mental health needs of youth involved with the juvenile system, but **answering community-based challenges with facility-based strategies is not the answer.** Mounting calls for closure of Long Creek Youth Development Center and a shifting national and local paradigm of secure confinement should help move the conversation away from a focus on institutional responses that have been shown to cost more with limited success and toward a focus on responses that cost less, involve communities, and demonstrate good outcomes.[44,45,46]

> "Long Creek is not a treatment facility. These kids are in lock down. It changes who they are; it changes who they think they are."
>
> —CHIEF JUSTICE LEIGH SAUFLEY

EXAMPLES OF JUSTICE REINVESTMENT

Align, Authorize, Assess, Accept, Allocate, & Act

Ensuring the investment of state and local savings in community-based services requires a multi-pronged approach. National research has identified several strategies for resourcing community-based alternatives to incarceration that can inform the development of a continuum of care.[50,51]

EXECUTIVE BRANCH

The governor and state agencies can work together to align resources to serve common, cross agency outcomes. This can include training, data capacity, performance measurement, and developing memoranda of understanding (MOU).

In New Jersey, the governor issued an executive order establishing the Task Force for the Continued Transformation of Youth Justice to review policies and evaluate the state's juvenile justice system.[52]

In Arizona, the Apache County Superior Court judge ordered a youth detention center closed to repurpose its use to help provide the community supports that were lacking for area youth.[53]

In North Carolina, a coalition of government, non-profit and private entities work together to transform rural prisons into agriculture and education centers.[54]

STATE LEGISLATURE

The state legislature can enact legislation to direct funding or establish a protected fund for a specified purpose. It can also set appropriation priorities to create and sustain a continuum or establish standards and accountability measures for providers.

In Kansas,[55] the state legislature created a "lockbox," called the Kansas Juvenile Justice Improvement Fund, to capture savings from reduced incarceration rates. Expenditures from the Improvement Fund were designated for youth programs and practices such as intake and assessment, court services, and community alternatives.

In New York,[56] Close to Home legislation directed the social services district to provide individualized service delivery to meet youth and community safety needs with performance measure requirements for each participating district.

Illinois created fiscal incentives for counties[57] and **Ohio** incentivized local courts to utilize community-based alternatives to confinement.[58]

JUDICIARY

The judiciary can lead the development of court-based alternatives to formal processes and include communities in the design of meaningful alternatives.

In New York, the Westchester Family Court has adopted a two-generation approach[59] to addressing educational disparities and achievement gaps.

In Lucas County, Ohio, a chief justice and court administrator partnered to repurpose the local detention center as an assessment center with services for youth that prevent unnecessary detention or commitment.[60]

PHILANTHROPY

Philanthropy can collaborate with agencies to provide "bridge money" as systems divest from facility-based models. Philanthropy can also seed and evaluate innovative solutions.

Social impact bonds (SIBs), also known as "Pay for Success," are a method for governments, nonprofits, and for-profit organizations to collaborate on social programs.[61,62] The Social Impact Partnerships to Pay for Results Act (SIPPRA) which was passed as part of the federal Bipartisan Budget Act of 2018 aims to support outcomes-based financing and provide funding for social impact partnerships, including pay for success (PFS) projects.

Opportunity zones, established in 2017 as part of the federal Tax Cuts and Jobs Act, seek to encourage private investment and economic development in specific economically distressed areas through tax benefits. Though a relatively recent process and unstudied, there are thirty-two opportunity zones in Maine.[63]

COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Community organizations implement and strengthen the continuum through local service delivery, advocacy, and workforce development. They can also Initiate ballot measures that advance funding of the continuum locally or statewide.

California's Proposition 47 ballot initiative required the state to calculate savings gained each year as the result of reduced reliance on facilities and deposit them in a fund dedicated to supporting victims, mental health, and substance use treatment and interventions for at-risk youth in schools.[64]

In Maine, a University of Maine initiative seeks to expand nursing programs to Maine's rural areas,[65] and at Maine Law, a rural lawyer program was created to address the shortage of legal professionals in rural areas of the state.[66]

Conclusion

PLACE MATTERS.

Place, as in the communities where youth live and transition to adulthood. Place, as in the buildings or facilities designated to support individuals when they cannot remain in their communities. These places *matter*; they shape the behavior, outcomes, and well-being for transition-aged youth. How these youth experience their home communities, out-of-home placements, and the return to home after a period of separation are also matters of place.

Place matters because of cost. Overreliance on costly places such as emergency rooms, residential treatment, crisis beds, and youth correctional facilities is widely acknowledged.[47,48] Place matters because of history. Many in Maine remember Augusta Mental Health Institute (AMHI) and Pineland Center and the high cost of de-institutionalization without a community safety net in place, leading to the establishment of the consent decree.[49] Maine can learn from this history. Place matters because of impact: institutional models intended to help can concurrently harm while diverting the lion's share of public and private resources away from community-based services.

Policymakers must take aligned action on increasing the scope and scale of community-based services for transition-aged youth in a way that builds on the strengths of communities, the best available data, national research and models, and local expertise. Such action can reduce, mitigate, and avoid altogether the negative outcomes that youth experience simply due to place—the place that they are born, the places they live, and the places where they grow, learn, work, and struggle to survive and thrive. This is the goal, because although places matter, people matter too, especially in a "small town" state like Maine. The successful transition of youth to adulthood ensures that this place, our place, can continue, not just to *matter*, but also to prosper.

"When I got out of Long Creek, I went through being homeless and lost a lot of childhood friends. I pushed everyone away. Not having anyone at the beginning of my life – all of that has lasted. I'm still dealing with it."

—SOPHIE,
Justice Policy Program Intern

Acknowledgements

THANK YOU!

This report and the Place Matters project has been funded by the John T. Gorman Foundation, the Rocking Moon Foundation, the Maine Juvenile Justice Advisory Group and the Annie E. Casey Foundation.

Special thanks to Danielle Layton, Katie Tomer, Henry Myer, Gabriel Olson, Jonathan Pranger, Sophie McMullen, Anne Sedlack, Alexis Mann, Jeremy Mack, and Susy Hawes for their efforts on the Place Matters project. Thank you to George Shaler, Kris Sahonchik, Christopher Northrop, Sarah Goan, Sara Gagne-Holmes, Erin Cinelli, Patience Crozier, and Mary Bonauto for their input on early drafts. Thank you to Robyn Dumont for her thorough review and suggestions.

Thanks to Paula Gerstenblatt and the social work students in SWO 553, Spring Semester 2018 for providing an initial analysis of data and their input on the project.

Thank you to Becky Wurwarg for all her work with the formatting and design.

Special acknowledgement and thanks to the countless number of youth service providers, stakeholders, and others across sectors, across Maine and across the county who were thought partners in defining the graphic used in this report.

This research was funded by the organizations named above, and we thank them for their support, but acknowledge that the findings and conclusions presented in this report are those of the authors alone, and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of these organizations.

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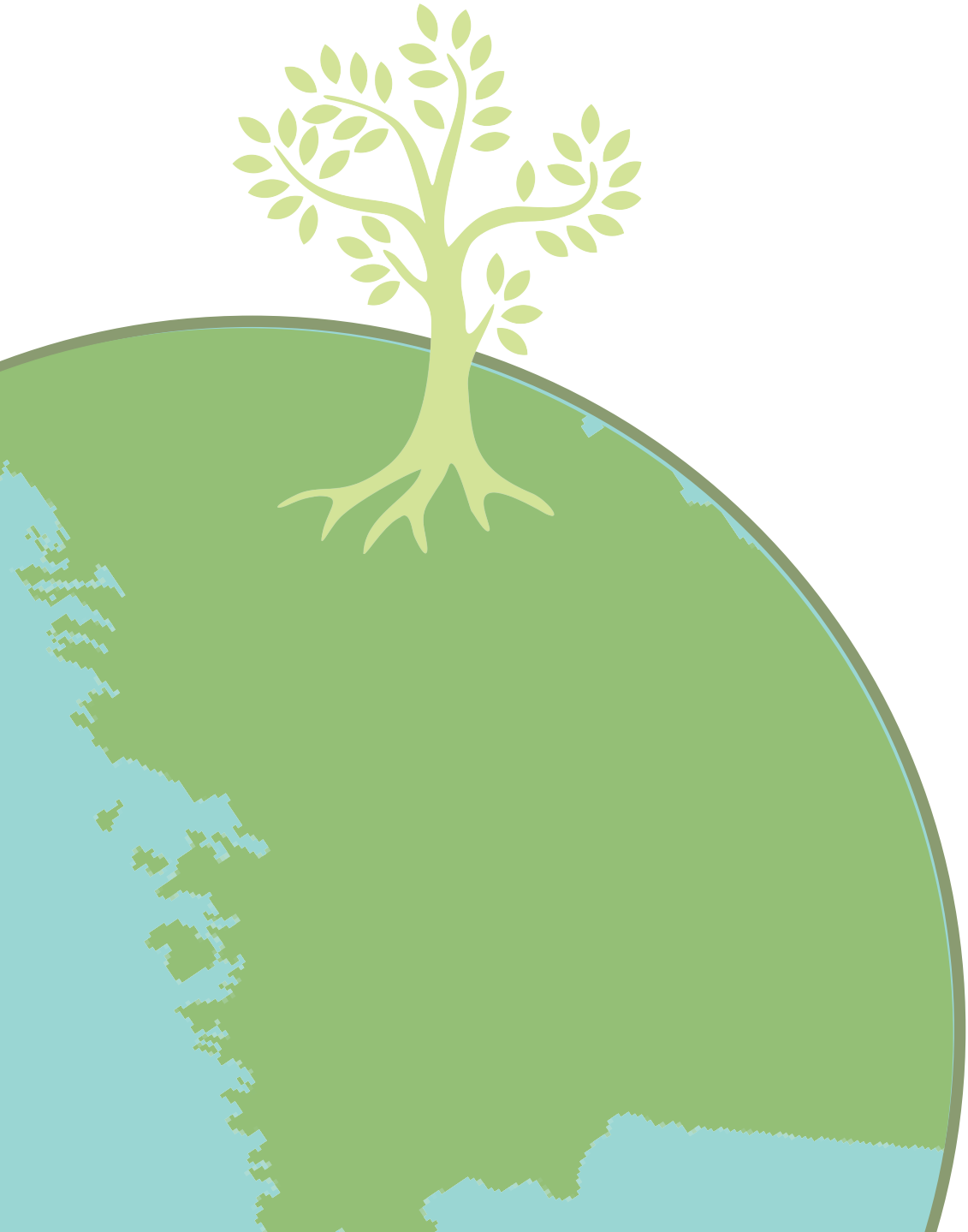
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