



# Aftercare for Indiana Through Mentoring (AIM) Indianapolis, Indiana

## Introduction

The Mentoring Toolkit 2.0 was developed by the National Technical Assistance Center for the Education of Neglected or Delinquent Children and Youth (NTAC) through a contract from the U.S. Department of Education. Its purpose is to provide information, program descriptions, and links to important resources that can assist juvenile correctional facilities and other organizations to design effective mentoring programs for youth who are neglected or delinquent, particularly those who are incarcerated.

Offender reentry has become a serious public policy issue for the juvenile justice system. According to the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's (OJJDP) Census of Juveniles in Residential Placement, almost 36,000 juvenile offenders were committed to correctional facilities nationally in 2013. (<https://www.ojjdp.gov/ojstatbb/ezacjrp>) In Indiana, nearly 950 youth were committed to the Indiana Department of Corrections. Almost all of these youth will return to their home communities before they turn 21.

Unfortunately, most communities are not organized to facilitate effective transitions from incarceration to productive member of society, and the number of obstacles to successful reentry is high. Many of the obstacles to effective reentry are factors that contributed to involvement in crime in the first place, and for which the offenders may not be receiving treatment while incarcerated.

Aftercare for Indiana Through Mentoring's (AIM) mission is to support Indiana's incarcerated youth in making the transition from corrections to community through healthy relationships with adult mentors. The AIM team is a diverse mix of dedicated adult volunteers and AmeriCorps members. The mentors provide a variety of reentry supports to incarcerated youth returning to their home communities throughout Indiana.

The mentors provide effective role models and use methods that target the unique needs of these youths. The mentors strive to inspire purpose, motivation and direction for as long as the youths are receptive to help. AIM focuses on life skills, and assist the youth in moving toward success by engaging local community resources and service providers. AIM seeks to inspire the youth to pursue successful and productive futures where they reach their potential, through self-development and the use of community resources.

## Program Model

The conceptual framework for AIM was conceived during the summer of 1995 by Dr. Roger Jarjoura while he was teaching a service-learning course on juvenile justice at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI). His students were providing some programming to juvenile offenders at the Indiana Boys' School as a requirement of the course. As a result of that experience, he found that the boys were being released from the facility without having a transition aftercare plan to support them after incarceration. Many of these youth were coming back to the facility within a relatively short time. AIM was developed to address this issue.

The program was initially modeled loosely after the Adolescent Diversion Project. In this project, Michigan State University undergraduate students serve as mentors for first-time offenders. AIM also uses college students in conjunction with other adults as mentors to help juvenile offenders transition back into the community.

Further, AIM adopted the tenets of Altschuler and Armstrong's model,<sup>1</sup> which stresses the importance of a comprehensive response to the five most significant needs of juvenile offenders returning to the community from incarceration: substance abuse, emotional stability, family problems, school problems, and intellectual impairment.

The AIM program recognizes that planning for reentry and the necessary supports should be individualized and should involve the following critical elements:

- Participation of all individuals and agencies, the institution, and the community that will play a role in designing and/or supervising the aftercare activities of the targeted youth.
- Development of a master plan that guides the intervention strategies used with the youth while he or she is in the institution and later in the community.
- Steps to facilitate easing the reentry experience by using specialized techniques such as transitional cottages and halfway houses.
- Monitoring the implementation of the aftercare plan to ensure adherence to the guidelines..

*Mentors can inspire and guide people to pursue successful and productive futures, reaching their potential through positive relationships and utilization of community resources.*



## Key Obstacles to Reentry

- **EMPLOYMENT**—A well-known obstacle to effective reentry is the difficulty that offenders, including juvenile offenders, face in obtaining employment. Sustaining employment is associated with lower levels of recidivism. Many offenders have poor work records and employment gaps, if they have any employment history at all. They lack the education and skills for most jobs and have inadequate work attitudes and habits. The likelihood of finding meaningful employment for a livable wage is further reduced by the fact that they now have a criminal record. The relationship between unemployment and crime has been clearly demonstrated—people are less likely to commit crimes when they are gainfully employed.<sup>2</sup>
- **EDUCATION**—Educational programming and ultimately student success can be an obstacle to effective reentry, especially for youth in the juvenile justice system. Although obtaining a high school diploma or GED is a basic requirement for obtaining the type of employment that enables a person to support a family, many youth function well below their age-appropriate grade level in school, and a significant number are functionally illiterate. Federal law mandates that youth with disabilities receive a structured and appropriate transition to local schools, but many still fall through the cracks.<sup>3</sup>

## AIM's Role in Addressing Obstacles

Much of what is needed to address the common obstacles of reentry/aftercare services for juvenile offenders is already in place in the community. Local communities have developed good resources to prepare at-risk youth for employment, and many of Indiana's school districts developed resources to address the needs of troubled youth in their local school systems.

Services are currently available from a wide variety of agencies throughout the state for youth who have been released from correctional facilities. In order to provide the most effective reentry given limited funding, the best strategy is not to develop more services, but rather to facilitate connections between the current service providers and the youth.

This is where AIM is able to best contribute to the reentry of youth leaving correctional settings. AIM assesses the needs of juvenile offenders before they are released from Indiana Department of Correction (IDOC) facilities. They then connect youth with community agencies that will provide services that will effectively meet their needs. Importantly, rather than duplicating services already available, AIM makes connections between youth in need of support to turn their lives around and programs in the community that have been vetted to ensure the services are effective for the population. Establishing these connections is crucial for successful juvenile reentry programs.

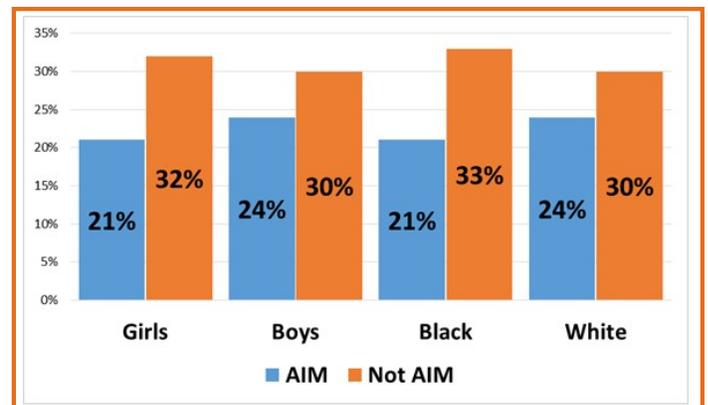
## Outcomes and Data

AIM mentors worked with 966 youth over a 1-year time frame. An evaluation on these youth found:

- 59.2 percent of the youths in AIM were enrolled in school within 30 days after their release.
- 31 percent of youth working with AIM while incarcerated, but not working with mentors after their release, were reincarcerated within 1 year after their release.
- 22 percent of youth working with AIM while incarcerated and then participating with mentors after their release, were reincarcerated within 1 year after release.

This represents a 29 percent reduction in the likelihood of reincarceration compared to those not served by AIM after release, and is below the national average of 25 percent returning to incarceration within 1 year after release from a juvenile correctional facility.<sup>4</sup>

Figure 1. Rates of Reincarceration Within 1 Year



These numbers suggest that the AIM model, if implemented with fidelity, can affect the Disproportionate Minority Contact problem that is so prevalent in the juvenile justice system.

1. Altschuler, D. M., & Armstrong, T. L. (1994). Intensive aftercare for high-risk juveniles: A community care model. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.
2. Maruna, S. (2001). Making good: How ex-convicts reform and rebuild their lives. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association
3. Harlow, C. W. (2003). Education and correctional populations. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics.
4. Müller, E. (2005). The juvenile justice system and youths with disabilities. Alexandria, VA: National Association of State Directors of Special Education, Inc.
5. Jarjoura, G. R. (2007). Evaluation Report: Aftercare in Indiana through Mentoring. Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University.

**Contact Information:** Roger Jarjoura, Founder, [rjarjoura@air.org](mailto:rjarjoura@air.org)