

# Continuum of Care for Communities



The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention’s “Continuum of Care for Communities” describes a framework for youth justice services—and the dynamic and evolving nature of youth involvement in this continuum. This framework has been shown to improve youth outcomes and reduce reoffending, thereby advancing public safety. The graphic reflects the process for providing services to youth impacted at each stage. In an effective continuum of care, the majority of youth would be served through prevention and early/low intervention services. The number of youth served should decrease at each stage in the continuum.

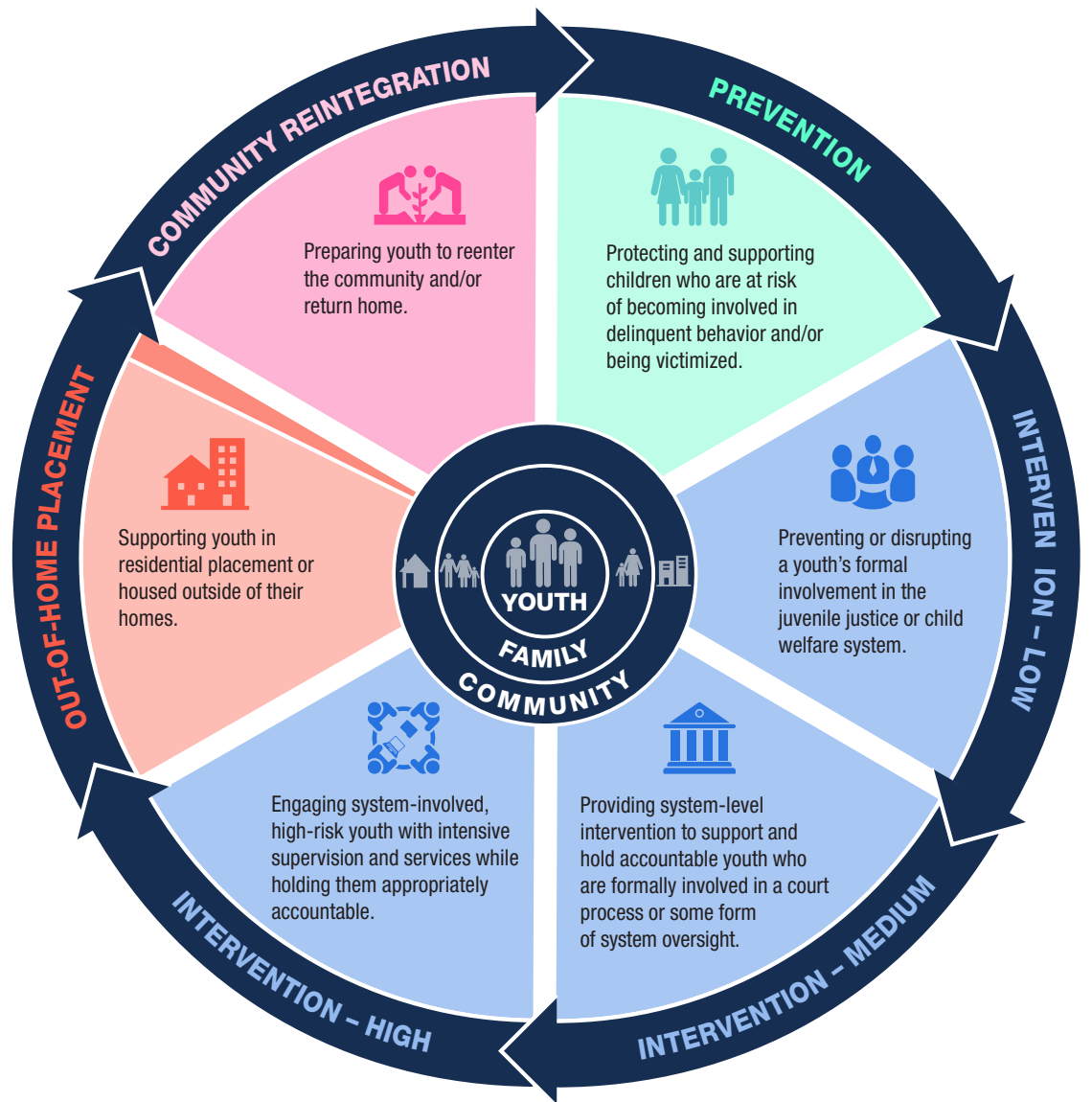
A broad array of youth justice programs and services ranging from prevention programs for young children and youth at risk of delinquency to intervention programs serving high-risk youth in secure residential settings and reentry programs for youth returning to their communities.

In addition to the array of services, system and policy changes play a critical role in achieving a fully effective continuum of care in which the needs of youth and families are met, positive outcomes are achieved, and personal accountability and public safety are maintained.

This approach has proven to be cost effective.

According to research from the Justice Policy Institute, the average state cost for secure confinement of a youth is \$588 per day (that’s \$214,620 per year), while community-based programs can cost as little as \$75 per day. In addition, diverting youth away from long-term involvement in the criminal justice system can result in much higher long-term economic and societal benefits.

The “Continuum of Care for Communities” framework centers around the needs of youth, families, and communities with services targeting the following areas.



## PREVENTION

These efforts reduce risk factors and promote protective factors for children at risk of becoming involved in delinquent behavior or being victimized.

**Examples:** Mentoring; community violence intervention and prevention; support for children of incarcerated parents; supporting children exposed violence.

## INTERVENTION

There are multiple opportunities to “meet youth where they are” and match the intervention to their individual needs and risk factors. Intervention efforts are considered **low, medium, or high** depending on where they fall along the Continuum of Care.

## INTERVENTION – LOW

Prevent or disrupt a youth’s formal involvement in the juvenile justice or child welfare systems, including after a youth has committed delinquent acts.

**Examples:** Pre-arrest diversion; mediation (conflict resolution that employs a neutral third party).

## INTERVENTION – MEDIUM

Support youth who are formally involved in a court process or other justice system oversight. Efforts may involve specialized services or programs targeting specific delinquent activities and/or youth.

**Examples:** Juvenile treatment and family treatment courts; restorative practices aimed at repairing harm done to victims.

## INTERVENTION – HIGH

Provide intensive supervision and services that support system-involved, high-risk youth, both pre- and post-adjudication. These efforts meet the complex needs of youth on probation and under in-home monitoring by providing an array of services to help them fulfill the conditions of their adjudication.

**Examples:** Community violence intervention (CVI); cognitive behavioral therapy; intensive wrap-around models of service.

## OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENT

Youth may be placed outside the home after the child welfare or juvenile justice systems intervene in response to the youth’s needs and risks. Residential facilities are responsible for a youth’s safety, education, and mental and physical health needs. As shown in the dark orange section of the infographic, secure care (in a locked facility) should only be used for the small percentage of youth who pose a serious risk to public safety and only for limited periods of time.

**Examples:** Nonsecure placement; group homes; foster care; shelter care; secure detention and confinement.

## COMMUNITY REINTEGRATION

Often called reentry or aftercare, these programs prepare youth to reenter the community and/or return home. Successful reintegration requires planning and collaboration to identify and deliver services needed by youth, families, and the community. Key components of the reintegration process include education, mental health services, housing, and family support.

**Examples:** Mentoring programs; education and employment programs; continued mental health and substance use treatment; partnerships with volunteer service organizations.