

The Youth's Community

Evidence Based Principle #6: Engage Ongoing Support in Natural Communities

The importance of family involvement and support systems in a youth's natural community (home, neighborhood, etc.) is a vital element for success while in treatment and once back in the community.

“Family” can include biological and non-biological individuals, surrogates, guardians, and foster families, among others.

“Support systems” can include additional individuals who are connected to a youth through positive, pro-social relationships and can include coaches, teachers, mentors, and church members, among others.

While a youth is engaged in treatment, this is the opportune time to engage these supports. A youth is learning and practicing many

new skills to help him/her be successful in the future and not reoffend. These additional individuals involved in a youth's treatment can provide additional support, encouragement, and reinforcement that all the hard work has been worth it.

While it can be effective to integrate treatment providers in the form of mentors or counselors during a youth's treatment, these providers are not always able to maintain the relationship in the community and when the youth is off parole.

Therefore, engaging individuals who have a strong, positive connection to the youth and who will be a part of the youth's transition and reentry into a community can be a highly

effective tool to reinforce skills learned in treatment.

Every individual learns skills through practice and reinforcement. The youth we work with are no different.

**Community family
and social supports:**

- ◆ Build or strengthen a positive rapport
- ◆ Are dependable
- ◆ Provide support and encouragement for positive behaviors
- ◆ Focus on self-improvement goals
- ◆ Create safe environments

Search Institute. (2016). Practical Solutions to Put Research into Practice. *Search Institute Connect*.

