

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

Hi. My name is Kim Godfrey Lovett, and I'm the executive director of the PbS Learning Institute and president of the PbS Education and Employment Foundation. Thanks for joining me and thanks for the folks at the National Reentry Resource Center for hosting this event. Thanks very much for this one special day to focus on young people and their reentry. For the next 30 or 40 minutes or so, I'm going to tell you everything my colleagues and I have learned about what makes a young person leaving juvenile justice custody or supervision most likely to have a successful reentry. I'm going to try to dump everything in my brain over the past 30 years into yours. I feel really strongly about this for many reasons. Not the least among them is that if we catch young people in the juvenile system and do what we need to do to turn their lives around, that's one of the best hopes we have of impacting our country's over-reliance on incarceration.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

Remember, not quite half of the adults in prison went through the juvenile system first. Let's stop that pipeline. I really believe if we can get this one piece of juvenile justice right, we can help the generational cycles of incarceration, poverty, unemployment, violence, and homelessness that disproportionately impacts young people and communities of color.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

The estimates for how many young people up to age 24 leave juvenile justice each year vary, largely due to the wide variation in reentry programs and services--the types, the locations, the agencies. One recent estimate by the Urban Institute was that about 200,000 young people leave residential placement or community supervision every year.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

What we know about these young people is their brains are ripe for learning, experiencing, rewiring, and healing. Regardless of the reason they ended up in juvenile justice, if we use this time as an opportunity to get them back on track rather than knock them off even further, we could turn around these lives and maybe create a little more equity for young people of color. The time has never been more critical than now.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

So first, I'm going to share with you what we learned working on two reentry projects supported by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention or OJJDP. Our work is focused on reentry at two points. When a young person leaves a secure or community residential placement like a facility or group home where they live and sleep. And when they terminate their post-placement community supervision like probation, parole, or aftercare, while living at home or someplace else in the community. Then I'm going to show you some of the national survey results of our PbS youth reentry survey so you hear how well reentry is working from some of the young people's points of views. And you'll get a sense of some of the benefits of bringing some new directions and new research in the field of juvenile justice.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

I want to start by asking you to think about what it means to give a young person leaving juvenile justice a real second chance. That's the business we're in, but what does that look like? They leave with so many strikes against them. It's hard to get back into schools, get a job, enlist in the military, admission to public housing. Think about our reentry programs and services and what can help. What skills, competencies, experiences, and opportunities do they need to grow up to be productive, purposeful citizens? My guess is that very few of us in this national reentry week celebration have had that experience ourselves. Walked out of a building we've lived in for four months or a couple of years, and gone home to a neighborhood to face the very barriers, challenges, discrimination, and disadvantages that likely led to system involvement in the first place.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

I have not, more due to the privileged life I was born into than my behavior. But I have talked to and listened to young people who have for decades now have said it was easy. And it's even harder now. They also made it clear that what they think, feel, and believe needs to be part of the reentry planning, preparation, and discussions. Great to have a GED, counseling, and a resume to take with them on their way out the door. But they need to feel confident, hopeful, and believe they can succeed.

A long time ago, one young man explained it to me this way. "When people tell me I'm bad, it don't make it easy to be good." The young man who said that to me back in 1989 was about to leave a Massachusetts Department of Youth Services secure treatment program after being there for about six years for a serious offense. He had completed every program possible. Education, culinary arts, life skills, counseling. The program had done everything possible to prepare him for reentry. I asked him what would help him from getting into trouble again. He wanted to feel hopeful, believe in a brighter future, but he couldn't quite do it. He had more experiences of discrimination, punishment, violence, and poverty, and hopelessness than he had hope. I'll never forget him or his words. He was a tall, handsome, dark-skinned young man who was scheduled to return to his family in about a month. I was working on my graduate thesis trying to better understand and measure the impact of shame, remorse, and empathy on youth preparedness for release. I spent about 18 months interviewing all the young people leaving the Massachusetts secured treatment programs. At least a couple of the young men I interviewed more than once as they cycled in and out of the program.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

I'd studied how other countries had established approaches different from ours, approaches that focused on making offenders and young people feel good, feel welcomed, and not like outcasts or stigmatized. What I learned was we, in America, do a pretty good job at making people get into trouble feel pretty bad about themselves, and like their futures are pretty bleak. More than one of those young people said to me over the course of those months, "Why bother? I won't live to be 21 anyway."

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

So let me back up and tell you where this is all coming from. PbS or Performance-based Standards was launched by OJJDP in 1995, to address the dismal at best, dangerous at worst conditions of America's confinement facility, through a cooperative agreement with the Council of Juvenile Correctional Administrators. The approach we took was to create a continuous improvement tool that set aspirational performance standards and collected outcome data that measured performance continually so juvenile justice agencies and professionals could use research to guide policies and practices by striving to meet the standards, but in regularly monitoring how well or to what extent the policies and

practices were put into place. OJJDP had learned that existing policy-based checklist standards didn't impact conditions of confinement.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

Think about it. Just having a paper policy prohibiting the use of isolation for example doesn't mean young people are not being isolated. PbS is all about data as information, using it in real time to impact lives, make decisions, manage risks, and hold ourselves accountable. Any PbS participants who are listening know it's a lot of data, but that's to provide a holistic picture and a holistic approach to continuous improvement.

The data is collected from administrative records, incident reports, and surveys of young people, staff, and family twice a year. PbS participants work with coaches, experts in the field to analyze the data and then use an online improvement process that continuously monitors and measures the impact of activities, trainings, and changes. We want to know are the efforts achieving the desired results.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

In 2004, when federal funding was ending, OJJDP helped us to establish the PbS Learning Institute to transition the free federal program to a fee for service nonprofit. We also were selected a winner of the Innovations in American Government Award by the Ash Institute for Democratic Governance and Innovation. Significant because it was confirmation PbS as a program was unique and effective in addressing conditions of confinement. And more so because it recognized and honored the work of all our participants. It's always nice to get a pat on the back.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

Fast forward to 2015, PbS was awarded a cooperative agreement by OJJDP to develop national standards and performance measures for reentry programs and services, largely modeling on the work we'd already done. OJJDP and many federal agencies had and are investing a lot of money into reentry with the belief that done right, reentry would increase public safety and positive outcomes for people involved in justice systems.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

Different from when we developed PbS starting in 1995 with basically a blank slate, the reentry standards project started with about one year of research by the Vera Institute of Justice into what works in preventing subsequent offending. And a national field scan by PbS to learn what practices and approaches exist in the field that are providing youth with what they need to be successful.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

The reentry standards project concluded at the end of 2019. And to follow that up, OJJDP awarded us a cooperative agreement to begin the implementation of the standards and measures by building capacities for agencies to collect, report, and analyze reentry data. That project brings together our reentry work, but the National Center for Juvenile Justice and their Fundamental Measures project. Fundamental measures in brief identifies data juvenile justice agencies should have available from beginning to end. First involvement a young person has in the system and continuing through reoffending.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

So first, here's what we found from the research review and the national field scan. It's all included in our technical report. It's all available online at [pbstandards.org/reentry](http://pbstandards.org/reentry). It's a hefty read. But we identified 13 practice domains that contribute to a young person's reentry. Thinking how to best present the field with all this information and not be overwhelming, we divided the domains into four groups: principles, core beliefs that are included in all activities and provide guidance to all circumstances regardless of leadership changes, and strategies, and goals. They're included in the reentry because they really should be a part of everything that we.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

The four principles are be fair. Youth perceptions of fairness have been shown a key indicator to both long-term success and their immediate behavior and facilities by the Pathways to Desistance study, the National Academy of Sciences, Reforming Juvenile Justice, and PbS' own research.

Procedural fairness is essential. But equally important is if the young people believe that they have been given a fair shot and if our social and legal system is something worth buying into, and if the juvenile justice programs and interventions are worth engaging in. Closely related and contributing to fairness, hold youth accountable without criminalizing normal adolescent behavior.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

We've learned that youth brains are more focused on rewards than consequences, and punishment doesn't work. Best practices hold the youth accountable with a restorative justice approach, making them aware of how their actions have affected the harmed person in community and repairing relationships, which helps the young person when returning to the community more likely to feel connected, and accepted, and safe.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

Values families. Starting about 10 years ago, we worked with the Vera Institute Family Justice Programs to launch an initiative to break down the barriers between juvenile justice staff and families. The walls had been built up almost since the beginning of juvenile justice. And there is a lot of finger pointing going on. The facilities blamed the families and the families blamed the facilities. The research clearly showed the positive impact of keeping young people and their families connected in most situations, because most young people returned to living with their families. Newer findings point out the need to do more than just engage their families, but to make sure they feel like valued partners. Ask them for input in decision-making, assess their strengths and needs, and do things to strengthen their relationships with their children. Family is defined beyond immediate relative to individuals important to a young person's life--like a teacher, a mentor, a coach, or other role models.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

And the last value is collaborate. Juvenile justice cannot do this work alone. We need the expertise of folks in education, mental and behavioral health, housing, substance abuse, job training. Collaborate at the state level and with local partners. Collaborate, collaborate, collaborate.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

The practices in our model are pretty self-evident if you're a juvenile justice person. But since I don't know who's watching this, I'm going to give you a bit on the findings of each one. And you'll see more in the data I'm going to share in a little bit. The four practices are specific components of reentry services and programs. Things that if done right, are most likely to help young people succeed. Performance is measured by program-level data describing the existence of activities and the extent to which practices are implemented.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

Assessment. Research makes clear the need for empirically validated assessment tools to identify young people's risks of reoffending, needs we need to address to reduce that risk, and individual factors that may affect a youth's ability to respond to interventions. Assessment should be comprehensive, drawing from any sources, and be used to match the young people with appropriate levels of supervision and the types and dosage of services.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

Reentry planning. The research was strong in supporting reentry planning beginning on day one. That it included assessment information and provides clear, goal-oriented, measurable, and well monitored maps for success. Planning should be done by a multi-disciplinary team that includes families and youth. And plans need to include a relapse plan and be able to encourage young people to make mistakes and recover.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

Case management. The term case manager is the individual responsible for making sure the plan is implemented. And the most successful case managers create developmental relationships with their young people. And this is based on work by the Search Institute. That is one of my favorite analogies. They describe the relationship between a young person and adult as being like the fluoride in toothpaste. It's a key ingredient that makes everything else work. The relationship makes the young people feel like the adult is trustworthy and dependable, listens and pushes them to keep living up to their potential, is supportive, is an advocate, and treats young persons with respect and collaborating on their futures. And continuous quality improvement, this is the process of continuing to look at data and how well services and activities are aligned with the program's mission and how the program is doing its business of juvenile justice.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

No more can we count on stories and anecdotes to describe what is being done for young people. Legislators, families, and the public and advocates demand data. Continuous quality improvement systems have timely, meaningful data that they use to make decisions.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

So now onto youth outcomes. These are the interim impacts on the young people and the key areas of healthy adolescent development. Again, what we believe are most likely to impact subsequent offending. We call them interim because they're more immediate measures than recidivism, and intentionally. So we have the information at a point where we can course correct or make changes as needed.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

Education, employment. Schools and jobs are key to preventing subsequent offending. Right now, it's quite a struggle to get back into schools and find jobs. What we learned was the most successful is to merge both education and employment together, and helping young people create a pathway toward a meaningful, profitable career. And one that the young person wants.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

Wellbeing and health. A new way of looking at it for juvenile justice. We need to look at wellbeing factors such as social connectedness, stability, safety, mastery, access to basic necessities, hope, life satisfaction, and resiliency, as well as ensuring good physical health and lifelong healthy habits. Taken from work done by the Full Frame Initiative, we learn that this is a larger lens through which we can address trauma in an informed way and recognize current challenges while building protective factors to support lasting change.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

Community connection and contribution. Newer research is showing the benefits of helping young people feel like they can contribute. Like they have value in their communities, and understanding that they are citizens with responsibilities. We need to provide experiences and opportunities to help them feel that good feeling of helping someone else out.

And lastly, the long-term outcomes are the ultimate impact on our community's safety. So again, all here in our technical report and from this, we've developed 33 standards and many, many data elements to help agencies better understand how well and to what extent they're implementing best reentry practices and the impacts on the young people, staff, and families. We identified administrative data as well as survey data from staff, youth, and families.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

So, I'm going to share what we heard from the young people so far. Keep a piece of paper and pencil nearby and see if you can distinguish how we can both prepare and help ready young people for reentry. We know some of the best ways to prepare a young person for reentry. Preparing is an incremental process. Finishing high school, getting a GED, attending or completing a certificate program, drafting a resume, practicing interviewing skills, getting a part-time job. It usually happens slowly over time, and there are many different levels of being prepared. Very prepared. Some are prepared, a little bit prepared.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

Looking at what young people tell us, it's clear there's also a readiness factor that we need to understand. They need to think and feel they are ready and prepared are not the same thing. You can be a little prepared or a lot prepared, but you're either ready or you're not. Ready is how the young person feels. And as you'll see as I share their responses to the PbS reentry survey during 2020, they can be prepared and not ready, and they can be ready and not prepared. We need to know from them about both in order to give them the best possible second chances.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

So onto the reentry survey. The PbS reentry survey asked 78 multiple choice questions about young people's preparation and their readiness for reentry. The survey was first available for PbS' April 2020 data collection, and more than 1800 young people about to leave corrections and community residential facilities completed the survey. The survey was again distributed for the PbS' October 2020 data collection, and another almost 1,800 young people about to leave corrections and community residential facilities completed the survey. It's about 99% of those administered.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

We've come a long way from how reentry used to work in juvenile justice. I remember when a young person turned age 18 or 21 and the agency would open the door at midnight and say, "Goodbye and good luck." We've come a long way. But as you'll hear, we still have a long way to go.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

I'm going to share what the young people told us to help emphasize how important it is, especially in reentry work, to understand from them what they believe, think, and feel.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

So I'm going to start with safety, because safety is the foundation for everything, especially for learning and changing behavior. We know from the Pathways to Desistance studies, the young people's experiences while in facilities and residential programs have a significant impact on both the safety and the climate within the facility, as well as on reoffending. Pathways added to the growing body of findings, with a couple of conclusions that can be put into practice. One, do you have a generally positive experience in custody are less likely to recidivate? And two, surveying youth about their perceptions and experiences as a cost-effective means to reduce reoffending. A little more specifically, they found that young people feeling safe reduces the probability of their reoffending by about 6% compared to those who did not feel safe.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

In 2020, about half the young people in our survey strongly agreed with the statement, "I felt safe here." Another 34% agreed, leaving about 15% of the others who did not feel safe. Safety is so important that in addition to asking young people as they're leaving about their safety, PbS also asks them in a climate survey that goes on during the month of April and October every year. And very similar to the reentry survey results, about 15% of young people responding say they fear for their safety. So we have work to do to ensure that all young people feel safe.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

And the definition of safety has been greatly expanding. It used to be just about physical safety. But now, we need to make sure young people feel safe psychologically, mentally, emotionally. And all of us need to feel safe in our race, culture, gender, sexual orientation, and expression. Safe to be themselves is a critical component of a young person's positive development. And when too many young people don't get to experience, racial and ethnic discrimination, and violence, and bullying only further disconnect already disconnected young people and make them afraid.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

Sadly over the years, we've always seen the most disagreement from young people and their families when we asked if they felt their race and cultural heritage was respected. While gender and gender identity and sexual orientation was respected by about 95% of the young people in our survey, about 10% fewer agree that their race and cultural heritage was respected. More evidence that the current attention on racial inequity is long overdue.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

Fairness arose as another key finding as we learned more about adolescent development and how the brain matures. The Pathways study found youth who rate a facility as fair are 7% less likely to have continued involvement in the system and 15% less likely to continue antisocial behavior.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

The National Academy of Sciences Reforming Juvenile Justice: A Developmental Approach also pointed to fairness as an essential component of juvenile justice. They recommend juvenile justice professionals from police, to judges, to facility workers approach their work as an exercise in moral education and positive legal socialization. Meaning follow fair processes and model fairness so young people feel they are treated fairly and we positively contribute to their development.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

It's encouraging to see the majority of young people in our survey saying they were treated fairly, felt respected by staff, and overall had a positive experience that we want all young people to have that experience. This data just tells me it can be done. We just need to do it a little more.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

And just quickly. Addressing young people's perceptions of safety and fairness and the other areas I'm going to share with you doesn't have to be a heavy lift. Use information to find out more. You can ask young people what would make them feel more safe or treated more fairly. One of my favorite answers are young people from urban areas who were suddenly out in the middle of nowhere and afraid of the animal noises at night. A little bit of information helped change that. So we present data as a sort of barometer telling you about the current conditions and flagging things that either need more information or that need attention.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

The NAS, the National Academies of Sciences' study also linked fairness with accountability, believing experiences of being treated fairly would result in better understandings of accountability, of taking responsibility for your actions. Holding youth accountable requires understanding that so much of what young people do that gets them into trouble is normal adolescent behavior. They are impulsive sensation seekers, peer pleasers, lack of sense of consequences, and the capacity for self-control. I have three of my own and love them dearly.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

So it was interesting that the most frequent response to PbS' question, "What helped you be most ready for reentry," was, "They held me accountable." And 73% checked held accountable.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:



So we need to know what does that look like? We know incentives, the right incentives work and punishment doesn't. But we're still learning about what works in terms of incentives. So we asked young people about being able to make mistakes. If the incentives helped. If they had input into the incentive, then a staff made more positive comments than negative.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

You'll see on the chart, most young people strongly agreed or agree that they were given chances to make mistakes and the incentives were helpful. But about 20% fewer strongly agreed that staff made more positive comments than negative. And about 5% more strongly disagreed.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

I've heard some programs or unit staff make three or four more positive comments to youth every day for every one negative. And it can be done. They did it. Our system is slowly shifting away from catching kids doing things wrong to catching them doing right. And one way is to do a little more involving of the young people, include them in meetings. And create youth councils, which not only gives them a forum for their voices, but helps them and practice leadership skills.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

The theory is that including young people in meetings about themselves, the planning meetings, meetings about consequences when something goes wrong, will make it more likely they will understand the expectations and be able to comply with what's expected. What is interesting about what they tell us is that only a very, very few, like, one or 2% say they do not understand or cannot comply with the expectations when they leave. But about 10% said they did not have input into meetings about themselves.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

Given the numbers and rates of reoffending, this raises the question: if they understand and can comply, what's missing to make them successful? Well, we know two keys are education and employment. And while most of these young people told us that they had a plan for education and employment they found helpful, and helpful being key here, and were ready for work, not as many had the transportation they need. And even fewer knew about resources to pay for continued education.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

This is where we begin to see some of the differences between being prepared and ready. The idea of preparation is to have plans for different scenarios and different situations. The long-term statistics about the benefits of education are mounting. Not only preventing reoffending, but in terms of lifelong, earning salaries and career mobility. At the same time, the cost for post-secondary education is going up and are out of reach for many young people.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

Because we feel strongly about the value of education, PbS started a scholarship program a few years ago for both young people and staff. After a few years, the requests came in for way more money than we had to give out. So we started the PbS Education and Employment Foundation to raise money for more scholarships, as well as our other financial awards. We get wonderful applications every year. And we learn a lot from what they have to say. Here are a few.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

"Finishing high school and going on to further my education has me excited about my future. I learn how to become a more responsible individual, self-reliant and motivated to follow the goals I set for myself. Growing up, I never thought I would go to college. If I get to go to college, I want to come back and speak at juvenile facilities to young men like me. I don't want them to think getting arrested is where it ends. It's just a chance for a new beginning."

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

"I am very passionate about being a mechanic because it reminds me of the long nights I spent in the garage with my father. As far as employment goes, I would want to be employed by Chevrolet to help continue to build the future cars of America. I'm in it because this has been my goal ever since I learned to walk. I didn't give up then, and I won't give up now."

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

So in addition to education employment, we need to provide opportunities for and nurture young people's relationships. Relationships with their family, including non-biological related adults who support the youth in ways like coaches, and mentors, and teachers. Relationships with their case manager, PO, reentry worker, public defender--and relationships with other young people. Staying connected to families was a challenge when the COVID-19 pandemic started. It stopped a lot of family visits, and quickly facility staff increased and/or started video calls. But while it kept the young people and families in touch, it did not replace a hug.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

A case manager, probation officer, public defender, reentry worker, they all have opportunities to build relationships with young people. The keys to that relationship as mentioned earlier, the fluoride is trust. We heard from young people that while the vast majority of case managers are available, not as many are adults that the youth can count on and trust.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

And relationships with peers has long plagued juvenile justice as they're so influential during adolescence. The shift we see now in research is instead of teaching young people to avoid negative peers and only hang with positive peers, is to giving them the tools they need to deal with the young people in their neighborhoods so they can stay on their path. So just remember, the intensions of all these questions is to help us better understand what we can do in reentry work. And just also remember, data is not good, nor bad. It's just information.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

In addition to experiencing positive and nurturing relationships, we want to try to give young people experiences that will help them along the path to becoming responsible, contributing adults, and productive citizens. Most facilities or programs offer certificate programs. CPR, carpentry, culinary arts, software, technology, some for different trades, but certificates are not always the answer.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

One story. There is an amazing welding certificate program in a very rural area. Kids loved it, but there wasn't a welding job for 200 miles. The second story. A program in an urban setting, the executive

director spent a significant portion of his time researching the local job market. He has changed the trainings they provide to meet the local needs with computers and nursing. And last I heard it was a trade. It's an example of a program providing meaningful pathways.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

There's mounting evidence of volunteering, participating in service projects and other forms of community involvement that contribute to better outcomes. Volunteering helps build trust and a sense of community. It increases the likelihood of employment, helps young people develop as civic leaders and socially and politically active adults, says the Opportunity Nation. They also point to deficiency and youth disconnection as two indicators of high incarceration levels.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

All this is happening. There are many programs I've heard of that provide these opportunities for young people to feel the joy, the satisfaction of helping others. Like one program that loaded up a van with young people in blankets and had them distribute the blankets to the homeless on a cold winter night.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

There are also examples of programs offering civic classes and helping change laws. The students in one of my favorite programs classes are frequent presenters before the state legislature and help lobby on issues like raise the age and expungement of juvenile records. So it's time to bring this all home. This has been a lot about preparation. Let's talk about how ready the young people are.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

They're pretty ready to go. 95% of them are confident they'll achieve their reentry goals. 94% believe they have some control over what happens. 93% say they're good learners, key for their continued education. And 91% are finding ways to bounce back resiliency skills that are key. In all of these questions, more than half of the young people said they strongly agreed, which to me is a strong sign that they feel ready, better than most recidivism numbers.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

And they have hope. Hope has been pointed to as a predictor of future wellbeing and as a motivational factor to achieve goals. If a young person believes they can have a better future, they're more likely to take the steps necessary to make it happen. It makes sense, right? Again, more than half felt strongly that they will have a good life when they're older, and know their life has a purpose, and they have meaningful goals they want to accomplish.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

So with this clear spark of, "Yes, I'm ready. What do they need?" Well, one of the biggest issues is stable housing and money for necessities. For some work with the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness and others working to end youth homelessness. We learned the best way to measure the stability of a young person's housing was by asking about where they sleep. It was interesting to see our results. As always, most of the young people said they will sleep at home. But more than one quarter also listed another location. And 7% listed four categories that most would agree can be called homelessness. Living in a shelter, couch surfing, outdoors, or in a car. This kind of information is critical to help them with their reentry. How can a young person go to school or work if they're living in a shelter, car,

outdoors, or couch surfing, or not being able to pay food? All the readiness and hope in the world won't pay for housing or food.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

Lastly, let's be sure to help them collect or access some of the documents they'll need. We're sharing the differences here between what the youth said the first half of the year with the second half, wondering about the impact of the pandemic and efforts to release more youth. What we see are more youth left in October with birth certificates, social security cards, valid IDs, their medical records, and prescriptions, and still the majority had a cell phone.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

So overall, young people believe that they can meet the reentry expectations. They feel hopeful, and they're thinking positively about their futures. They're ready. Given what we know about the adolescent brain, and impulsivity, and the lack of control, it's easy to see why they feel ready. Only very rarely have I heard a young person say they were not ready to leave a juvenile facility or program. So how do we work with that positivity, that strength and keep it alive, and at the same time, make sure we set them up for success?

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

So the good news is we know where to focus our efforts. Education, employment, fairness, and all the other domains identified early. And we know we need to prepare them with the skills, capabilities, connections, opportunities, and supports they need. And we know we need to help them have confidence, hope, and excitement for what's next so when the time comes, they are ready. So to me, reentry is like making sure young people leave with a backpack on their backs filled with everything they need. And that's how we can give them the best possible second chances.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

So I want to end with a simple example of how we keep young people full of hope and positivity by recognizing their talents and do our work preparing them for reentry. This is a young man from a facility in Arizona who was performing live in 2019 before the pandemic and was the runner up in the PbS Kids Got Talent Contest. The contest has run every year since 2015, and it is open to all youths in PbS facilities to perform any and all talents. Singing, card tricks, dancing, shooting hoops, spoken words, and more. The staff at his facility saw the contest as an opportunity to provide positive experiences for the youth, as well as catch them doing things right. They allowed all young people who modeled appropriate behavior to participate in a talent contest for the facility. 21 young people participated as either performers or helping with the setup and take-down of the staging area. A couple of young people even earned their community service hours for the work.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

One staff joined playing the saxophone, and a second joined in with a rap with two young people. The experience was such a success, they were considering extending the facility talent contest to the police to build more trust between the young people and law enforcement.

Kim Godfrey Lovett:

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The facility submitted some of the performances to PbS, and this young man was selected the runner-up. The winner was not allowed to leave his facility, but this young man's facility, staff, and family worked together so we could fly him and his mother to Boston and he could perform during our annual awards night in front of about 150 or 160 adults. It was awesome. Thank you for your time. I look forward to our work together giving young people real second chances.