LEAP Lessons Learned
Checklist for Reentry Youth

Education related questions to ask of each youth entering the institution:

- Age of youth
- How many years of high school have they attempted or completed?
- How many credits have the earned?
- Are they eligible for special education services?
- Do they have stable housing upon release?
- What is their criminal history/record and how much of a barrier does it pose for them in employment? Did they have suspensions or expulsions prior to incarceration?
- Did their crime occur at school or involve school staff/property/students?
- Can they think of a school staff/personnel who was a support to them the last time they were in school?
- Were they involved in sports?
- Were they involved or do they have other extra curricular interests? Music, debate, chess, arts, drama, etc

Statistics

- 16,415 high school students dropped out of school in Washington state in 2008/2009 (5.1% of high school students)
- 38,144 students were suspended or expelled from school in 2008/2009 for harassment, intimidation, bullying, assault or violent criminal offenses
- 8,711 students were suspended or expelled from school in 2008/2009 for drug and alcohol related offenses
- On time graduation rate for white students is 80.5% compared to 64.3 % for youth of color (youth of color are disproportionately represented inside institutions)
Suggestions

- Youth returning from institutions need to have a reliable schedule
- They are used to having their days planned out by others
- They are likely to be more successful if their day has more predictability
- High school creates predictable schedules – alternative programs are often not a full day and can sometimes provide too much flexibility
- Youth with criminal records will have more challenges in employment – so they need more education (the higher the barrier, the more education they will need – may need to look at self employment skills)
- Youth will need a mentor/contact/connection – can we help them find that person inside the school?
- Take advantage of special education eligibility to focus in on transition and vocational services
- Youth who have had previous discipline will need to be ready to demonstrate change and progress to the public school system
- Enrollment delays can create frustration from the beginning – get their paperwork in order
- Youth will need to learn to address their criminal record and stay positive (they will be judged on their record)
- Youth may need guidance or encouragement about whether and why to chose GED over high school – help them consider all the relevant options
- Make other community linkages – such as DVR (Department of Vocational Rehabilitation)
- Assist youth in obtaining state IDs (can this happen while inside JRA?)
- Discuss safety planning in advance and be ready to discuss with public schools – depending on criminal history
- Identify at least one genuine strength for each youth and help them learn ways to use that strength every day
1. The Washington state constitution gives all youth the right to an ample equal education.

2. Generally, youth between 8 and 17 are required by law to attend school.

3. Schools are allowed to call the police if a student gets in trouble.

4. The right to an education cannot be taken away without a fair process.

5. Students have the right to challenge school punishments.

6. A student has the right to a hearing to challenge both the fairness of a suspension or expulsion and the facts of the incident in question.

7. If a student is suspended or expelled, she has a very limited amount of time to request a hearing, sometimes as little as 3 days.

8. The school must tell the student that she will be suspended or expelled.

9. The school must tell the student which rule she broke and why she is getting kicked out.

10. The student must have a chance to tell her side of the story.

11. A student may have the right to stay in school until after the hearing, once a hearing is requested.

12. Kids and parents can collect info and even witnesses to support their side of the story.

13. A suspended or expelled student has the right to bring a lawyer with her to her hearing.
Youth Law 101: School Discipline

TeamChild

What People Are Saying

“I got kicked out of school and I can’t get back in.” “No one ever told me why I was expelled.” “I didn’t do what the school says I did – is there anyone I can talk to about what happened?”

The Buzz Words You Should Know

**Short-term Suspension:** a suspension for 10 school days or less.

**Long-term Suspension:** a suspension for a definite period of time lasting longer than 10 consecutive school days.

**Expulsion:** an exclusion from school for an undefined period of time.

**Emergency Expulsion:** immediate removal from school for an indefinite period of time when the student’s presence would be unsafe or would disrupt the educational process.

**Exceptional Misconduct:** a category of bad behavior that can be punished more harshly; school districts create their own list of behavior that falls into this category.

**Due Process:** schools must use disciplinary procedures that are fair and give the student notice and an opportunity to challenge the allegations and punishment.

**Petition for Readmission:** the process used by students who have been suspended or expelled to for readmission to school.

Basic Rights and Legal Concepts

1. Students have a right to be given written notice that they are being disciplined before they are punished (Emergency Expulsions are an exception to this rule).
2. The notice must include a statement of the rule(s) violated, the punishment proposed, and information about how the student can challenge the action.
3. The notice must be in the language predominantly spoken in the student’s household.
4. Students have a right to challenge the discipline and tell his or her side of the story. The timelines for making such challenges are very short (3 days for Short and Long-term Suspensions and Expulsions, 10 days for an Emergency Expulsion).
5. Students have a right to request readmission at any time, however schools are not required to accept all students who request readmission.

For More Information

Educational Advocacy Manual, Ch. 4 found at www.teamchild.org
RCW 28A.600
WAC 392-400
www.washingtonlawhelp.org

Advanced Concepts

- Alternative Education
- Progressive Discipline
- Zero Tolerance
- Discipline Hearing
- Disproportionality
- Special Education
- Readmissions Contracts
- Juvenile Justice Cross-over
- Nexus to off-campus conduct
School to Prison Pipeline

Youth

School

Conflict at school

Suspended or expelled

Arrested at school

Detained!

Criminal Record

Arrested in the community

Out of school, nothing to do, no direction

School to Prison Pipeline