



PART 2

UNDER THESE CONDITIONS:

**ACCOUNTABILITY SHOULD
BE POSSIBLE**

A TOOLKIT



THE
GAULT
CENTER
Defenders of Youth Rights

YEAH
YOUTH EMPOWERMENT FOR ADVANCEMENT HANGOUT

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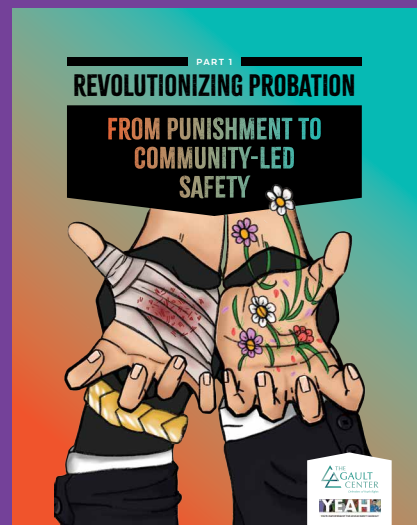
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INTRODUCTION

This Toolkit is Part II of the *Revolutionizing Probation from Punishment to Community-Led Safety* series. This Toolkit offers concrete tools to reimagine and transform youth probation orders, starting with a self-assessment to evaluate probation orders currently in use in your jurisdiction, followed by a national landscape assessment exposing the types of conditions that youth currently face on probation. This Toolkit also offers best practice recommendations and supporting research to transform probation orders as well as a Model Probation Order that was developed in accordance with youth feedback and adolescent development research. Pierce County, Washington was the first jurisdiction to implement the Model Probation Order, and this Toolkit offers a spotlight on their holistic approach to probation transformation and the impact of the new order on youth. Lastly, this Toolkit includes a narrative guide that offers key talking points and a messaging framework to move the dialogue toward universal implementation of the Model Probation Order to support youth success while keeping youth and communities safe.

This Toolkit is offered as part of the *Juvenile Probation Accountability Coalition (JPAC)*, which was created to end mass supervision and strengthen pathways for community-based healing, accountability, and safety for all youth. As you explore probation order transformation in your jurisdiction, please [share your wins, concerns, and questions with us](#), so that we can continue to grow and sharpen our tools as a community.



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PROBATION ORDER SELF ASSESSMENT

Please use this self-assessment to evaluate the level of alignment between your jurisdiction's juvenile probation order with adolescent development research.

If you find that your probation order has one or more of the following, please review the best practice recommendations and Model Probation Order to align your probation order with evidence-based principles to promote positive youth development and community safety.

MY JURISDICTION'S PROBATION ORDER:

- ☐ Has more than 5 conditions
- ☐ Is written above a 6th grade reading level¹
- ☐ Requires more than 6 months on probation
- ☐ Does not allow for an opportunity for early termination to reward positive youth behavior
- ☐ Does not require youth and families to weigh in on programming
- ☐ Is written in a way that does not consider or allow youth to make mistakes
- ☐ Restricts behavior, instead of supporting positive behaviors, such as:
 - ☐ curfew restrictions
 - ☐ generalized association restrictions
 - ☐ electronic monitoring requirements
- ☐ Gives authority to probation and/or police to search youth
- ☐ Requires fines, costs, and fees to be paid
- ☐ Mandates services, treatment, or programming that exceeds the scope of the underlying offense
- ☐ Is framed in a way that outlines legal rules and requirements without offering youth an explanation as to why the condition is needed
- ☐ Includes conditions that enable arbitrary and racially disparate enforcement and/or violations, such as:
 - ☐ mandatory school attendance and compliance requirements
 - ☐ generalized association restrictions
 - ☐ "good behavior" mandates

¹ To check your probation order's reading level, use the "Editor" function in Microsoft Word and select "Document Stats" under "Insights." The Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level score reveals your document's reading level based on U.S. grade levels. To learn more about the Flesch-Kincaid Grade level, visit [Flesch Reading Ease and the Flesch Kincaid Grade Level](#) by readable.

NATIONAL ANALYSIS OF PROBATION CONDITIONS: CURRENT REALITY

When a youth is ordered probation as part of their disposition in juvenile court, they are required to follow a set of rules, often referred to as “probation conditions.” If a youth does not abide by their probation conditions, it is often referred to as a “technical violation.” Technical violations may result in incarceration, widening the criminalization of adolescent behaviors.

Based on a national sampling of over 1,000 conditions from 65 juvenile probation orders across 17 states, we found the following:²

NUMBER OF CONDITIONS:

Young people are subject to an average of 14 probation conditions, ranging from 5 to 27 conditions.

READABILITY:

On average, probation conditions are written at a 12th grade reading level,³ making it difficult for youth to comprehend and remember their conditions.

LENGTH OF PROBATION:

The length of probation varies widely, ranging anywhere between one month to an open, indeterminate period, meaning that youth may be subject to probation conditions, under the threat of incarceration, for years.

TYPES OF CONDITIONS:

Probation conditions generally include: (1) reporting requirements, (2) education and employment requirements, (3) curfew requirements, (4) electronic monitoring, (5) search and seizure requirements, (6) prohibitions on who a youth may associate with, (7) mandated services, (8) fines and fees, (9) restrictions of specific behaviors and actions of youth, and (10) parental/caregiver requirements.

² The Gault Center analyzed a national sampling of 1,008 conditions from 65 juvenile probation orders across 17 states in 2026. The probation orders that were reviewed were from various regions across the country, including rural, suburban, and urban jurisdictions. The orders also covered a wide range of offenses, from truancy to felony sex offenses. [hereinafter NATIONAL PROBATION ORDER ANALYSIS].

³ The probation conditions, in aggregate, were found to be written at a 12.7 reading level based on the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level.

Below are examples of actual probation conditions that youth are required to follow, under the threat of incarceration.⁴

REPORTING CONDITIONS

These conditions require a youth to regularly report and/or provide information to a probation officer.

- Meet with your probation officer when told.
- Provide a release of information to the probation officer for any evaluations, examinations, counseling, or treatment.
- You shall answer promptly, truthfully, and completely to all inquiries made by your probation officer.
- Answer all reasonable inquiries and obey all instructions of the probation officer.
- Keep the probation officer informed of any changes in address, phone number, family, school, or employment status.
- You must permit the probation officer to visit you in your home, school, work, or any program to which you are ordered to attend.

EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS

These conditions require a youth to comply with education and/or employment requirements.

- Youth shall attend each and every day of school, shall follow all school rules, shall complete all homework and turn the same in on time, shall maintain passing grades, shall have no tardies, detentions, suspensions, or expulsions.
- Attend school every day, be on time, and attend all classes. Measurably improve attendance/performance/behavior.
- If you have been legally excused from school, you must work full-time or attend an alternative educational program.
- I will attend school/work daily, as scheduled and as prescribed by law, obey all school regulations. I will notify my probation officer by 10:00 AM on any day I am absent from school/work. On that day of illness or suspension, I will not leave home day or night, except for an emergency, without my probation officer's approval.
- Be employed or provide proof that employment is being diligently sought.
- Contribute to his/her own support when financially able to do so; submit proof of earnings and expenses when requested.

⁴ NATIONAL PROBATION ORDER ANALYSIS, *supra* note 2. Please note, any identifying names, locations, or jurisdiction-specific language in the probation conditions were removed to protect anonymity and confidentiality.

RESIDENCE AND CURFEW CONDITIONS

These conditions require a youth to reside at a designated place and follow the rules of the home, including curfew.

- Be in your home and follow any curfew set by your parent, guardian, or probation officer.
- I will reside inside my home or court ordered placement. I will notify my probation officer(s) of changes in my residence within 24 hours.
- I will stay where my probation officer has told me to stay. I will obey the curfew hours set by my parents, guardian, custodian, or probation officer.
- Curfew: 8:00 pm nightly. You must be home every night at this time. This may be earlier if deemed appropriate by the officer. Any deviation requires an extension from the probation officer and parent.
- Reside with parent(s)/guardian/legal custodian and abide by all rules of that residence.

ELECTRONIC MONITORING CONDITIONS

These conditions subject a youth to electronic monitoring.

- Cooperate with electronic monitoring (standard or GPS) and tracker services as put in place at the discretion of the probation officer.
- I agree to have an ankle bracelet and follow all rules of the program.
- Consent to electronic monitoring by cell phone.

SEARCH & SEIZURE CONDITIONS

These conditions require a youth to submit to search and seizure of self and/or property by the probation officer.

- The juvenile shall provide the probation officer with all usernames and passwords to all social networking sites.
- Minor child shall cooperate with probation on all matters affecting probation, including: search of person or property without probable cause; chemical testing of blood, breath, urine, sweat or saliva; and viewing of all electronic devices and social media accounts.
- You will permit a search of your person, any accompanying articles, locker, bedroom, and any area under your immediate control by a probation officer at any time without notice.
- My person, property, residence and social media are subject to search.
- I will submit to search and seizure (person/home/any digital device/phone/computer) for pornography and/or sexually explicit materials.
- I will submit to a search of person, residence, or vehicle at any hour of the day or night by any law enforcement or peace officer without a search warrant.
- Submit to a test of your body fluid at your own expense for alcoholic or drug content, and consent to a search of your person and any real estate or personal property, including motor vehicles owned by you or under your possession or control at any time by any law enforcement officer or probation officer.
- Submit a DNA sample to the probation officer or juvenile hall staff within 30 days.

ASSOCIATION CONDITIONS

These conditions limit or prohibit a youth's contact with a specific individual or group of people.

- Not associate with anyone on probation or parole or any person named by parents or probation officer.
- The child shall not associate with negative peers as identified by the parent or probation officer.
- You are not to associate with anyone who is violating the law.
- Said juvenile will not associate with any person on juvenile or adult probation, any person on bond supervision, any person of bad reputation or questionable character.
- Refrain from frequenting unlawful or disreputable places. At the discretion of the probation officer, he/she will avoid association and contact with individuals or be in places deemed to negatively impact his/her ability to be law abiding. Such individuals could include co-defendants, known drug and alcohol users and others serving terms of probation supervision or having pending cases in court.
- I will not associate with persons deemed undesirable by my Probation Officer nor will I associate with other probationers or parolees in the community.
- I will not be a member of or associate with any person the child knows or should reasonably know, to be a member of or to be involved in the activities of a criminal street gang; I will not wear or display items or emblems reasonably known to be associated with or symbolic of gang membership; I will not acquire any new tattoos or gang-related piercings and have any existing tattoos or piercing photographed as directed by the probation officer.

MANDATED SERVICES CONDITIONS

These conditions require a youth to engage in a program or service.

- Submit immediately to random drug and alcohol testing as directed by the Probation Officer.
- Urine Screens (UAs): You will be required to submit random UAs. This will be determined by your case plan and at the discretion of the officer. At any time, the number of UAs may be increased or decreased by the officer. If you miss a scheduled UA, it is considered a positive UA.
- As a means of addressing rehabilitation and redirection of behavior the child shall be required to adhere to all the rules of probation and to the following conditions: any other programs, workshops, and classes required by probation.
- Comply with all mental health recommendations. Attend all appointments as scheduled and take all medications as prescribed.
- Comply with medication management for ADHD.
- Shall submit to a psychological evaluation and follow the recommendations of that evaluation.
- I will attend and cooperate with all recommended services and programs as determined by my case plan and probation officer(s). My probation officer(s) may make changes to my case plan based on my service needs and I will cooperate with the conditions of the updated case plan.
- Participate in individual, group, or family counseling, as directed by the probation officer: alcohol and other drug counseling, anger management counseling, sex offender program.
- Said juvenile, along with parents, will execute any and all releases of information with applicable service/treatment provider to facilitate the probation office receiving any and all records deemed necessary by the juvenile office for supervision of said juvenile.

FINES AND FEES CONDITIONS

These conditions require a youth to pay fines or fees.

- You will not be released from probation or the jurisdiction of the court until all costs/restitution are paid.
- You shall pay, through the probation office, any and all monies ordered to be paid by the Court in strict accord with terms fixed by the Court. Failure to comply may result in further Court action, including filing a civil judgment and/or extension of your probation term.
- The child shall be directed to pay a probation fee of \$150.00.

RESTRICTION CONDITIONS

These conditions prohibit a youth from engaging in a particular activity.

- Shall not use or possess alcohol, tobacco, or any controlled substances except by prescription and shall submit to a chemical test of blood, breath or urine upon the request of a probation officer or law enforcement officer acting at the request of the probation office.
- No unsupervised access to computer-facilitated content, including any social network.
- Shall not leave the state without permission from the court or probation officer unless in the company of a parent or guardian.
- Get permission from your parents/guardian before leaving home and make sure they know where you are at all times.
- Refrain from driving a motorized vehicle; do not apply for a driver's license or a driver's permit without the permission of the probation department.
- You must not possess any firearm, ammunition, or other assaultive weapon. You must obtain formal permission from the court to participate in any legal hunting activities.
- Not contract any financial obligations without approval of the probation officer.

CONDITIONS DIRECTED TO PARENTS/GUARDIANS/CAREGIVERS

These conditions require the youth's parent, guardian, or caregiver to follow specific requirements as part of the youth's probation.

- The parent or guardian shall cooperate with the probation officer and advise the probation officer if the youth violates any of the conditions of probation.
- The parent or guardian shall obtain permission of the probation officer before allowing the youth to leave in excess of two days from the county. Parents may not permanently leave the county with youth without court permission.
- Be responsible for obtaining and maintaining health insurance and/or safe transportation to probation, treatment providers, and rehabilitation programs.
- Natural parents shall obtain a full psychological evaluation and shall successfully complete all recommendations made. Natural parents shall provide full evaluation reports to probation.

OTHER CONDITIONS

These conditions are examples of other types of requirements that youth must follow on probation.

- I will follow any other terms or conditions deemed necessary by the probation officer.
- I will submit to polygraph examinations (purpose of which is the verification of offense history, compliance with treatment, and/or probation plans).
- I will write a letter of apology.
- I will submit to DNA testing if required by law.
- I will tour the local detention center.

BEST PRACTICE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROBATION ORDERS & SUPPORTING RESEARCH

Probation orders create a legal framework that determines a young person's experience on probation. They bind a young person to a set of rules they must follow, or else face consequences that may include incarceration. Probation orders have the power to set the tone of probation and shift probation practices from surveillance to support.

It is critical that probation orders reflect and incorporate evidence-based practices that lead to positive youth development and community safety. Below are best practice recommendations and supporting research covering four key components of a probation order: 1) the number of conditions, 2) the language and readability of conditions, 3) the length of probation, and 4) the types of conditions.

At the end of this section is a Model Probation Order that was developed in accordance with youth feedback. This model serves as an example of a probation order that incorporates best practice recommendations and adolescent development research.

1. NUMBER OF PROBATION CONDITIONS

BEST PRACTICE:
Probation orders should be limited to 3 to 5 conditions.

MODEL PROBATION ORDER:
The Model Probation Order includes 3 mandatory conditions and 2 optional conditions. The optional conditions should be utilized narrowly and when necessary to address specific needs related to the underlying offense.

Supporting Research:

- Working with youth on a few targeted objectives at a time is more effective to achieve positive behavioral change than a list of standard conditions.⁵
- Young people have a hard time remembering and keeping track of multiple conditions, especially when they are stressed—this is a result of their developing brains.⁶
- In fact, a study revealed that young people were unable to recall most of their probation conditions that were ordered moments before in court.⁷
- When there are more probation conditions, technical violations and risk of confinement increase, disproportionately impacting Black youth.⁸

⁵ See NAT'L COUNCIL OF JUV. AND FAM. CT. JUDGES, [THE ROLE OF THE JUDGE IN TRANSFORMING JUVENILE PROBATION: A TOOLKIT FOR LEADERSHIP](#) 40-41 (2021); Naomi E.S. Goldstein et al., "You're on the Right Track!" Using Graduated Response Systems to Address Immaturity of Judgement and Enhance Youths' Capacities to Successfully Complete Probation, 88 TEMP. L. REV. 803, 828 n.127 (2016); NAT'L JUV. DEF. CTR., [PROMOTING POSITIVE DEVELOPMENT: THE CRITICAL NEED TO REFORM YOUTH PROBATION ORDERS](#) 1-2 (2016).

⁶ See Goldstein et al., *supra* note 5, at 813-19.

⁷ See also TEAMCHILD & JUV. INDIGENT DEF. ACTION NETWORK, [WASHINGTON JUDICIAL COLLOQUIES PROJECT: A GUIDE FOR IMPROVING COMMUNICATION AND UNDERSTANDING IN JUVENILE COURT](#) 9 (2012).

⁸ See Jyoti Nanda, *Set Up to Fail: Youth Probation Conditions as a Driver of Incarceration*, 26 LEWIS & CLARK L. REV. 677, 725 (2022); Allyson L. Dir et al., *The Point of Diminishing Returns in Juvenile Probation: Probation Requirements and Risk of Technical Probation Violations Among First-Time Probation-Involved Youth*, 27 PSYCH. PUB. POL'Y, AND L. 283, 288 (2020); NAT'L COUNCIL OF JUV. AND FAM. CT. JUDGES, *supra* note 5, at 56.

2. LANGUAGE AND READABILITY OF PROBATION ORDERS

BEST PRACTICE:

Probation orders should be written between a 4th and 6th grade reading level and offer youth-friendly explanations as to why each condition is ordered.

MODEL PROBATION ORDER:

The Model Probation Order is written at a 6th grade reading level.⁹

Supporting Research:

- There is a high prevalence of youth with language impairments and challenges in the juvenile legal system, with some estimating that as many as 90% of youth in the system have a language impairment, compared to 7 to 12% in the general population.¹⁰ This is in addition to the high prevalence of youth with disabilities and trauma in the juvenile legal system, which creates a compounding impact on a young person's ability to understand and comprehend probation conditions.¹¹
- National literacy experts estimate that 85% of youth in the juvenile legal system experience literacy challenges.¹² And a study found that youth in prison on average were reading at a 4th grade reading level.¹³
- Generally, experts recommend that for groups at risk of limited literacy, text should be written at a reading level that is at or below 6th grade.¹⁴
- Simplifying language significantly improves young people's understanding of court orders and expectations of their behavior.¹⁵
- Providing explanations as to why a particular condition is ordered can also help a young person understand the broader purpose and consequence for each condition, thus improving overall success.¹⁶

⁹ This is based on the Flesch-Kincaid Grade Level, a readability metric that analyzes text based on U.S. school grade reading levels.

¹⁰ Summer Avey, *Developmental Language Disorders in the Juvenile Justice System*, DEPARTMENT OF SPEECH-LANGUAGE PATHOLOGY, CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SAN MARCOS 6 (2020).

¹¹ TEAMCHILD & JUV. INDIGENT DEF. ACTION NETWORK, *supra* note 7, at 6; Nanda, *supra* note 8, at 709; *see generally* GEORGETOWN LAW JUVENILE JUSTICE CLINIC & INITIATIVE, *COMMON DISABILITIES EXPERIENCED BY YOUTH IN THE JUVENILE LEGAL SYSTEM* (2026).

¹² Hannah Rehm, Comment, *Bars Over Books: How the Justice System Fails Juveniles*, 6 LSU L. J. FOR SOC. JUST. & POL'Y 319, 320 (2026).

¹³ OPEN SOCIETY INST., CRIMINAL JUSTICE INITIATIVE, *EDUCATION AS CRIME PREVENTION: PROVIDING EDUCATION TO PRISONERS* (1997).

¹⁴ Clear Language Group, Readability, <http://www.clearlanguagegroup.com/readability/> (last visited June 4, 2026).

¹⁵ *See* TEAMCHILD & JUV. INDIGENT DEF. ACTION NETWORK, *supra* note 7, at 11.

¹⁶ *See* Goldstein et al., *supra* note 5, at 827.

3. LENGTH OF PROBATION

BEST PRACTICE:

Probation terms should be limited to 3 to 6 months for probation to identify and connect youth with community-based supports, with an opportunity for early termination to reward positive youth behavior.

MODEL PROBATION ORDER:

The Model Probation Order starts at a 3-month period for probation, with an opportunity for early termination.

Supporting Research:

- System involvement, even if limited, harms both youth and public safety.¹⁷
- Specifically, studies have found that formal processing of a young person's case increases the likelihood of rearrest compared to youth who are diverted, particularly among low-risk youth.¹⁸
- Studies have also highlighted that longer probation terms do not correlate to lower rates of recidivism, but rather increase the likelihood of technical violations, which carries the risk of revocation and incarceration.¹⁹
- The vast majority of young people desist from (or mature out of) engaging in risky behavior as their brain develops.²⁰ In fact, a study that followed over one thousand young people adjudicated with serious offenses for seven years found that as young people transition to adulthood, they generally reduce or stop engaging in offending behavior.²¹
- The key to desistance, which ensures community safety, is supporting a young person's psychosocial maturation.²² Healthy development and maturation require adult role models, positive peers, and opportunities to make individual choices and build self-reliance.²³

¹⁷ See SAMANTHA HARVELL ET AL., URBAN INST., [TRANSFORMING JUVENILE PROBATION: RESTRUCTURING PROBATION TERMS TO PROMOTE SUCCESS](#) 2, 8 (2021); THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUND., [TRANSFORMING JUVENILE PROBATION: A VISION FOR GETTING IT RIGHT](#) 8-9 (2018); NAT'L COUNCIL OF JUV. AND FAM. CT. JUDGES, *supra* note 5, at 62.

¹⁸ See THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUND., *supra* note 17, at 8-9.

¹⁹ See THE PEW CHARITABLE TRUSTS, [STATES CAN SHORTEN PROBATION AND PROTECT PUBLIC SAFETY](#) 9 (2020).

²⁰ See generally Edward P. Mulvey et al., *Trajectories of Desistance and Continuity in Antisocial Behavior Following Court Adjudication Among Serious Adolescent Offenders*, 22 DEV. & PSYCHOPATHOLOGY 453 (2010).

²¹ See generally *id.*

²² NAT'L COUNCIL OF JUV. AND FAM. CT. JUDGES, *supra* note 5, at 62-63.

²³ THE GAULT CTR. & YEAH PHILLY, [PART 1: REVOLUTIONIZING PROBATION FROM PUNISHMENT TO COMMUNITY-LED SAFETY](#) 20 (2026); NAT'L RESEARCH COUNCIL, NAT'L ACADEMIES PRESS, [REFORMING JUVENILE JUSTICE: A DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH](#) 101-02 (2013).

4. TYPES OF PROBATION CONDITIONS

BEST PRACTICE:

Probation conditions should be individualized and narrowly tailored to the underlying offense.

They should reflect the developmental realities of youth, taking into account mistakes as a normal part of adolescence. Instead of focusing on surveillance, control, and punishment, probation conditions should align with what research shows leads to improved outcomes for youth and communities: support, stability, and opportunity.

MODEL PROBATION ORDER:

The Model Probation Order re-frames probation as an opportunity for probation officers to support young people in reaching their full potential.

Supporting Research:

- Youth reported feeling surveilled, controlled, and punished on probation—all of which negatively impacted their mental health and wellbeing.²⁴
- Youth reported what they need instead is support, stability, and opportunity.²⁵
- Research shows that focusing on positive reinforcements and connecting youth with their communities are effective strategies that promote positive behaviors, particularly when compared against conditions that aim to surveil and control youth.²⁶
- Conditions that focus on deterrence, discipline, and surveillance either increase or have no impact on recidivism,²⁷ which is particularly important when considering research that shows most youth will naturally stop engaging in offending behavior as their brains mature and they transition to adulthood.²⁸
- Community-based programming can play a critical role in reducing recidivism by nurturing a young person's psychosocial development through connections with adult mentors, positive peer influences, and opportunities to engage in autonomous decision making.²⁹
- Youth and family buy-in play a critical role in ensuring youth success on probation based on procedural justice principles.³⁰ Research has shown that if young people perceive the legal system as legitimate and fair, they are more likely to engage in “rule-following behavior.”³¹
- If a sanction is disproportionate to the youth's alleged misbehavior, it can create an effect of “learned helplessness” where youth no longer believe they possess control over their situation and thus stop responding to consequences.³²

²⁴ THE GAULT CTR. & YEAH PHILLY, *supra* note 23, at 2-3.

²⁵ THE GAULT CTR., YEAH PHILLY, INST. OF WOMEN & ETHNIC STUDIES, [REVOLUTIONIZING PROBATION FROM PUNISHMENT TO COMMUNITY-LED SAFETY, PART I, TIP SHEET: KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE NATIONAL WEBINAR 4](#) (2026).

²⁶ See THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUND., *supra* note 17, at 9-10.

²⁷ See *id.*

²⁸ See NAT'L RESEARCH COUNCIL, *supra* note 23, at 100-02; see generally Mulvey et al., *supra* note 20, at 453.

²⁹ See THE GAULT CTR. & YEAH PHILLY, *supra* note 23, at 19-20; THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUND., *supra* note 17, at 9-10; NAT'L RESEARCH COUNCIL, *supra* note 23, at 100-02; Nanda, *supra* note 8, at 733.

³⁰ See Nanda, *supra* note 8, at 729.

³¹ See Goldstein et al., *supra* note 5, at 830.

³² See *id.* at 821.

Model Probation Order

Youth's Name:	Case No.
Date of Birth:	
Case Matter:	

Probation helps keep you and others safe while supporting you to reach your goals and full potential. You will be on probation for 3 months. If you try your best and follow these rules, you might be able to finish probation early.

1. Keep in touch with your Probation Officer.

Your Probation Officer can support you in reaching your goals while on probation. If you call, make sure to leave a message with your name and number.

2. Try your best to go to school or work regularly. If you are not in school or looking for a job, work with your Probation Officer to find which option makes the most sense for you.

Going to school or working can help you meet your goals. Your Probation Officer will collaborate with you to make sure you are in a program that fits with your life and goals.

3. Stay in a safe home.

It is important that you are safe. Your Probation Officer will work with you and your parent or caregiver to make sure you are staying in a safe place. If the place you are staying no longer feels safe, please talk to your lawyer and your Probation Officer. They can offer support and resources.

The Court will also expect you to follow the conditions checked below:

- ☐ Work with your Probation Officer to find and complete a counseling and/or treatment program that aligns with your goals. Your Probation Officer will help you sign up. Your Probation Officer will also help you with transportation.
- ☐ Complete ___ hours of an activity that you and your Probation Officer identify together will help you grow positive behaviors. Your Probation Officer will help you sign up. Your Probation Officer will also help you with transportation.
- ☐ Your counseling or treatment hours can count for this requirement.

SPOTLIGHT ON PIERCE COUNTY, WASHINGTON

Implementation of the Model Probation Order

In 2021, the Gault Center worked with Pierce County, Washington, to transform their juvenile probation order, resulting in Pierce County successfully implementing a version of the Model Probation Order in 2023.

Pierce County went from a standard probation order with 18 conditions to a simplified order with 4 mandatory conditions and 5 optional conditions. The 4 mandatory conditions are 1) keep in touch with your probation counselor, 2) try your best to go to school or work regularly. If you are not in school or looking for a job, work with your probation counselor to find which option makes the most sense for you, 3) stay in a safe home that you, your probation counselor, and your parent or caregiver agree on, and 4) stay out of trouble.

Similar to the Model Probation Order, Pierce County's order offers youth explanations on why the conditions are being ordered and creates an expectation for probation to support youth in reaching their goals by working with youth to identify tailored community programs and helping arrange for transportation to ensure youth success.

Prior to the implementation of the new probation order, five youth on probation in Pierce County were confidentially interviewed by the Gault Center about their experiences with their probation order.³³ All five youth stated that the order was too long and difficult to understand.³⁴ The youth also described not fully understanding what they needed to do to successfully complete probation based on the order.³⁵

In 2025, following the implementation of the Model Probation Order, the Gault Center worked with the Pierce County Probation Unit to hear from youth about their experiences with the new probation order. **Ten young people were interviewed and every youth reported that the language on the new probation order made sense to them.**³⁶ One youth specifically stated, “I felt the order was easy to read and understand.”³⁷ Another youth who had been on probation previously under the prior standard probation order noted that the “language is way better than the order I had before.”³⁸

Further, **most of the youth were able to recall their specific probation conditions after their court hearing**—and youth reported that they relied on a combination of their attorney, probation officer, and the judge to understand the requirements and expectations of probation.³⁹ **Young people also generally reported they felt their probation conditions were fair, with one expressing particular appreciation for the opportunity**

to end probation early.⁴⁰ Conditions that young people wished were different related to restrictive conditions, such as curfew conditions, with one youth stating they wish they could “be outside more.”⁴¹ Another youth wished they did not have to comply with a counseling requirement that felt unrelated to their underlying adjudication.⁴²

Positive aspects identified by youth included moments where they felt heard and supported during the court and probation process. One youth expressed feeling supported by their attorney when their attorney took the time to walk through and explain all the probation conditions and answer all their questions before court—the youth recalled, “I went into court knowing what to expect.”⁴³ Several other youth appreciated the moments where they felt the judge and probation officer recognized and understood their unique situation and the progress they were making toward their goals.⁴⁴ Youth also noted that it made a difference when they felt that the judge and probation officer believed in them.⁴⁵

The effort to transform Pierce County’s probation order was largely led by the leadership of the juvenile probation department, which was spearheaded at the time by TJ Bohl (then Pierce County Juvenile Court Administrator) and Kevin Williams (then Probation Program Manager). This effort, importantly, was part of a holistic approach to create an internal culture that

³³ Focus group interviews with young people on probation in Pierce County conducted in 2021 by the Gault Center (on file with author).

³⁴ *Id.*

³⁵ *Id.*

³⁶ Interviews with young people on probation in Pierce County conducted in 2025 by Pierce County juvenile probation counselors, in partnership with the Gault Center (on file with author).

³⁷ *Id.*

³⁸ *Id.*

³⁹ *Id.*

⁴⁰ *Id.*

⁴¹ *Id.*

⁴² *Id.*

⁴³ *Id.*

⁴⁴ *Id.*

⁴⁵ *Id.*

reframes the role of probation to genuinely support youth by leaning into their interests, developing community partnerships, and connecting youth with tailored community resources that fit their life goals. TJ explained, “Part of the reason we were able to [implement the Model Probation Order] is because we were tending to our culture, recognizing the racism that exists, and unpacking that in our workplace. Racism and inequities are not going to go away because we have a different court order, but if we continually unpack and dive into the different structures and policies that uphold it, we can be more open to change the mental model.”⁴⁶

TJ, through his visionary leadership, has spent decades shaping a new mental model for probation. Starting by directly asking youth and families what they want and analyzing data to track and implement what leads to better outcomes for youth, TJ successfully created safe spaces for youth to grow and learn in communities. This has resulted in tangible improvements to public safety and youth outcomes.

In fact, Pierce County’s probation practices were audited and assessed by the University of Washington, at the request of the County Council in 2024.⁴⁷ **This assessment revealed that Pierce County Juvenile Court (PCJC) outperforms the nation in lower recidivism rates**—in 2023, 18% of youth who completed a 12-month probation program faced a new charge, compared to a national recidivism average of 34% of youth on probation.⁴⁸ The assessment concluded “we can be fairly confident that current PCJC practices are yielding recidivism rates around 47 to 50% lower than other jurisdictions.”⁴⁹

In addition, **the assessment found that Pierce County has a higher probation program completion rate compared to other jurisdictions.**⁵⁰ In 2023 and 2024, the average completion rate of probation programs was around 75%, compared to a national range of 22 to 45%.⁵¹ The assessment noted, “Much of the court’s success is likely due to their extensive community partnerships and triage process to encourage the best match between youth and family need.”⁵²

Pierce County’s implementation of the Model Probation Order aligns with their probation practices of developing deep relationships with community partners and connecting youth with community resources, tailored to their goals and interests. The probation order also serves as an important measure of accountability to uphold the purpose of probation to protect community safety by supporting youth, as opposed to surveilling youth.

To learn more about this holistic approach to probation transformation, please contact:

TJ Bohl (tjbohl@justsolve.net) and

Kevin Williams (kevinwilliams.KJW@outlook.com).

⁴⁶ *Id.*

⁴⁷ UNIV. OF WASH., COLAB COMMUNITY & BEHAVIORAL HEALTH POLICY, [PIERCE COUNTY JUVENILE JUSTICE ASSESSMENT 3](#) (2025).

⁴⁸ *Id.* at 6.

⁴⁹ *Id.*

⁵⁰ *Id.* at 13.

⁵¹ *Id.*

⁵² *Id.* at 12.

NARRATIVE GUIDE

Under These Conditions: Accountability Should Be Possible

CAMPAIGN IDENTITY

Campaign Goal: To establish a universal juvenile probation order with three clear, developmentally appropriate conditions that all young people can understand, complete, and succeed under.

Campaign Title: Under These Conditions

Campaign Taglines:

- Accountability Should Be Possible.
- Three Conditions. Better Outcomes.
- Clear Expectations. Stronger Futures.
- Fair Conditions Create Success.
- Youth Deserve a Chance to Succeed.
- Could You Succeed Under These Conditions?

CAMPAIGN SUMMARY

The [Juvenile Probation Accountability Coalition \(JPAC\)](#) seeks to transform how the nation understands juvenile probation and accountability. For decades, juvenile probation has been framed as a necessary mechanism for supervision and public safety. Yet across the country, youth are routinely subjected to dozens of probation conditions that vary widely by jurisdiction, are difficult to understand, and often create pathways to failure rather than success.

JPAC's campaign, *Under These Conditions: Accountability Should Be Possible*, aims to replace a fragmented and punitive probation framework with a universal juvenile probation order built around three clear conditions: keep in touch with your probation officer, try your best to go to school or work regularly, and stay in a safe home.

The campaign is grounded in the belief that accountability should be understandable, achievable, and connected to positive youth development.

This narrative campaign is a systems-change strategy designed to shift public understanding, influence policymakers, mobilize youth and families, and create the conditions necessary for policy changes that positively impact young people and communities across the country.

Drawing inspiration from the narrative methodologies developed by the [Institute of Women & Ethnic Studies](#), JPAC will combine lived experience, participatory research, strategic communications, cultural organizing, and policy advocacy to create a national narrative shift.

THE CAMPAIGN SEEKS TO MOVE THE PUBLIC CONVERSATION



From: “Young people fail probation because they make poor choices.”



To: “Young people are often set up to fail by probation systems that impose unrealistic, excessive, and confusing conditions.”

Ultimately, JPAC aims to establish a new national standard: Accountability should be fair, clear, developmentally appropriate, and designed to support youth success and community safety.

WHY THIS CAMPAIGN MATTERS

Across the United States, over 200,000 young people are placed on juvenile probation each year. Many receive lengthy lists of conditions that include curfews, reporting requirements, school mandates, treatment requirements, community service obligations, electronic monitoring, restrictions on associations, and numerous other requirements.

The result is a system that often measures compliance rather than growth.

Youth frequently report:

- Not understanding their probation orders
- Receiving conflicting instructions
- Struggling to balance school, work, transportation, and probation obligations
- Experiencing anxiety and confusion
- Being punished for technical violations rather than new offenses

To create change, we need to focus on narratives. As long as the public believes that more conditions equal more accountability, meaningful reform will remain difficult. JPAC’s campaign, *Under These Conditions: Accountability Should Be Possible*, seeks to challenge that assumption.

NARRATIVE THEORY OF CHANGE

Current Narrative



The dominant public narrative suggests:

- Strict probation keeps communities safe.
- More conditions create more accountability.
- Violations occur because youth are unwilling to comply.
- Probation failure reflects individual shortcomings.

These beliefs shape legislation, court practices, and public opinion.

Desired Narrative Shift



JPAC seeks to establish a new understanding:

- Accountability works best when expectations are clear.
- Youth are more successful when conditions are limited and understandable.
- Families need support and resources, not surveillance.
- Fair probation improves public safety.
- Systems should remove barriers to success rather than create them.

Long-Term Narrative Outcome



- The public comes to see excessive probation conditions as ineffective and harmful.
- The public comes to view universal probation conditions as common-sense reform.
- The public comes to expect probation systems to support success rather than monitor failure.
- The public comes to demand probation models that center support, care, and opportunity for youth because it builds community safety.

JPAC VALUES

All campaign messaging and storytelling should reinforce the following values:

DIGNITY - Every young person deserves to be treated with dignity regardless of their involvement in the legal system.

CLARITY - Youth should clearly understand what is expected of them.

ACCOUNTABILITY - Accountability must be achievable and meaningful.

FAIRNESS - No young person's success should depend on their identity, where they live, or who supervises them.

GROWTH - The juvenile system should prioritize development and positive outcomes.

FAMILY PARTNERSHIP - Families should be supported, not burdened.

NARRATIVE ARCHITECTURE

Dominant Narrative



- Young people fail probation because they make bad decisions.
- More rules create more accountability.
- Strict supervision is necessary to ensure compliance.
- Probation violations reflect individual failure.

Counter Narrative



- Many youth fail probation because conditions are excessive, confusing, and unrealistic.
- Probation systems often create barriers to success.
- Families are frequently overwhelmed by complicated requirements.
- Too many conditions reduce accountability rather than strengthen it.

Transformative Narrative



- Accountability should be simple, clear, and achievable.
- Every young person deserves a probation order they can understand.
- Three clear conditions can be more effective than dozens of conflicting requirements.
- Fair probation creates stronger outcomes, healthier families, and safer communities.

THE MESSAGE HOUSE

CORE MESSAGE:

Young people succeed when expectations are clear.
A universal probation order with three conditions creates accountability that works.

SUPPORTING PILLAR 1:

Clarity

- Youth cannot follow expectations they do not understand.
- Clear expectations lead to better outcomes.

SUPPORTING PILLAR 2:

Fairness

- No youth should face dozens of conditions in one jurisdiction while another faces only a few.
- Fairness requires consistency.

SUPPORTING PILLAR 3:

Family Stability

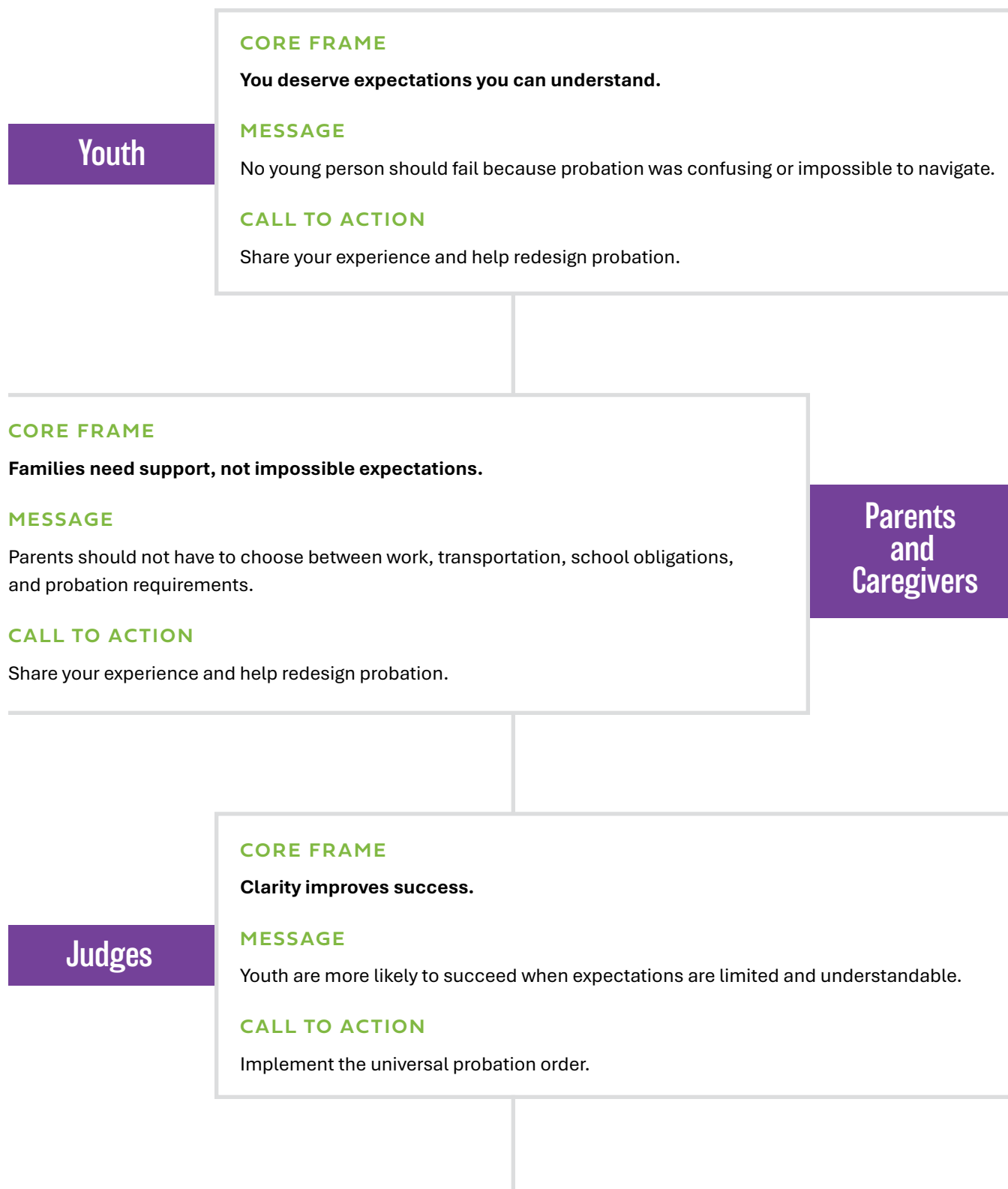
- Families should not be expected to navigate impossible systems.
- Probation should support families rather than create additional burdens.

SUPPORTING PILLAR 4:

Public Safety

- Youth who remain connected to school, work, and family are more likely to succeed.
- Successful youth create safer communities.

AUDIENCE MESSAGE MAPS



CORE FRAME

Success is more important than surveillance.

MESSAGE

Clear conditions reduce confusion and improve outcomes.

CALL TO ACTION

Help build a probation model focused on youth success.

**Probation
Officers**

Legislators

CORE FRAME

This is common-sense reform.

MESSAGE

Universal probation conditions create consistency, fairness, and accountability.

CALL TO ACTION

Support legislation and administrative reforms.

CORE FRAME

Narrative change drives systems change.

MESSAGE

This campaign addresses a national issue affecting thousands of young people and families.

CALL TO ACTION

Invest in youth-led policy reform and change that youth want to see.

Funders

Media

CORE FRAME

The story is not youth failure. The story is system design.

MESSAGE

Young people across the country are navigating probation systems that vary dramatically depending on where they live and often create barriers to success.

CALL TO ACTION

Tell stories that focus on true accountability, fairness, and reform.

STRATEGIC POSITIONING STATEMENT

JPAC is leading a national movement to redefine accountability in juvenile probation by advancing a universal probation order built around three clear conditions that young people can understand, complete, and succeed under.

Through youth leadership, participatory research, public storytelling, and policy advocacy, JPAC seeks to transform juvenile probation from a system focused on surveillance, control, and punishment into one focused on growth, fairness, and success. Safe and healthy young people build safe and healthy communities.



@gaultcenter | DefendYouthRights.org



@yeahphilly | YeahPhilly.org

