

WHAT IS THE FIRST THING YOUR PUBLIC DEFENDER SHOULD ASK YOU?

Tell Me your Side of the Story and how I can help you in the court

How do you want to approach this case not just assuming yourself (Lawyer)

Question was inter What is the first + you should ask public defender

Are you here to help me? Who do you work for?

Advice

For Youth Justice Stakeholders, From Youth

WHAT'S THE MOST IMPORTANT THING THAT YOU WANT TO HAPPEN IN YOUR COURT CASE?

ending court case End!

Taking a deal is worse than keeping your original charge

To know what my charges are and why?

Having your charges get dropped

I want guidance and actual positive resources in order to lead myself and other youth out of the court system

do your job to the best of your ability's
- JAY

Going Home 

getting it over and help do better

explain what's going on

HOW MUCH OF WHAT HAPPENS IN COURT DO YOU UNDERSTAND? HOW COULD WE HELP YOU UNDERSTAND MORE?

Explain what the judge is saying so I could understand

- meet with cits before the court hears, so enough time is given to explain conditions/sharon with chat

Use smaller words not words that only you & the Judge understand
ask other professionals to explain

2017-2018 Youth Leadership Teams

Advice for Stakeholders

The Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) convenes four “Youth Leadership Teams,” covering all parts of the state, to involve young people in youth justice decision making and empower the next generation of young leaders. These teams meet four times during the academic year, and provide an opportunity for young people who have had involvement with the justice system - past or present - to share their perspectives and give input. During the second year of these teams (2017-2018), youth worked on this advice book for stakeholders. This book includes input from the 60 youth who attended at least one meeting during this time.

The input summarized and quoted in this document is the input of the youth themselves, not the opinion of the Department and Children and Families.

We are grateful to the founding partners and other adults who have supported the youth during this founding year, to the community partners who have helped make these meetings productive and meaningful, and above all to the youth for their dedication and courage in sharing these insights for the purpose of helping to create a better youth justice system for all youth.

3 workers

8 judges

12 law enforcement

15 public defenders

workers

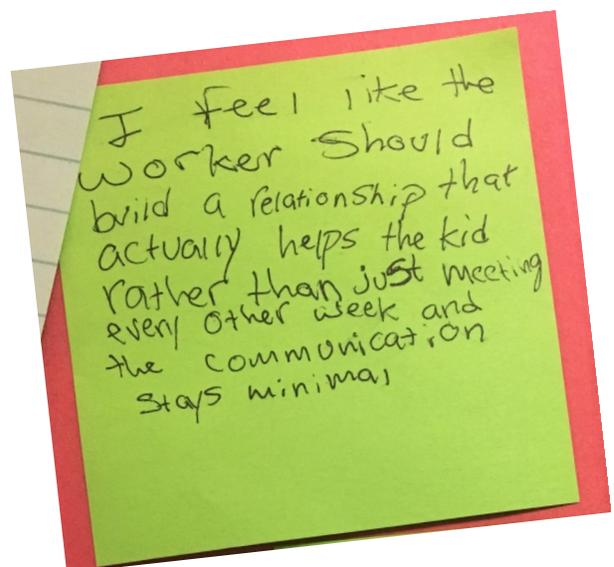
communication style is important

- 1 Understand that I need a safe environment to feel relaxed.
- 2 Keep language simple.
- 3 Be mindful of your tone of voice.
- 4 Don't just speak in professional language — use words we can understand.
- 5 Be honest, no sugar-coating — if it feels like you're lying to me, that makes me mad.
- 6 Make sure youth insights are considered.
- 7 Listen.
- 8 Address us how you would like to be addressed.
- 9 Model respect.
- 10 Don't talk to us like we're kids.
- 11 Validate what the youth is telling you.
- 12 If you treat me like a kid/criminal I'm going to act like a kid/criminal.
- 13 Be relatable, use humor, be authentic, be sincere.

workers

relationship building is key

- 1 We want workers to relate to us, show they are human, build a relationship.
- 2 Relationship building is really important — take time to develop relationships.
- 3 Trust is earned (both ways) — look for chances to earn trust.
- 4 Don't push anyone to talk about their past and/or problems until they're comfortable.
- 5 Have patience, be humble. Remember, no one is going to automatically open up to a stranger.
- 6 Understand my situation and listen and trust me.
- 7 Remember we have feelings and don't just look at us as a case.
- 8 Treat me how you would treat your child if they were in my shoes.
- 9 I feel like the worker should build a relationship that actually helps the kid rather than just meeting every other week and the communication stays minimal.



workers

be open and non-judgmental

- 1 Know that I'm a good person.
- 2 We may not like you/everyone.
- 3 Don't take things personally.
- 4 Check your issues/stress (other cases) at the door. Don't bring personal issues into work.
- 5 Don't be scared or intimidated.
- 6 Remember that you don't know everyone's full story. Remember every kid is different.
- 7 Reports/paper is one source of information, not the only source.
- 8 Start fresh — don't hold our past against us. Don't judge us.
- 9 Don't assume. Ask us what we need, don't just assume.
- 10 Respect my rights.
- 11 Know that we do have empathy for you and how many cases you have.
- 12 Don't be so quick to judge.

workers

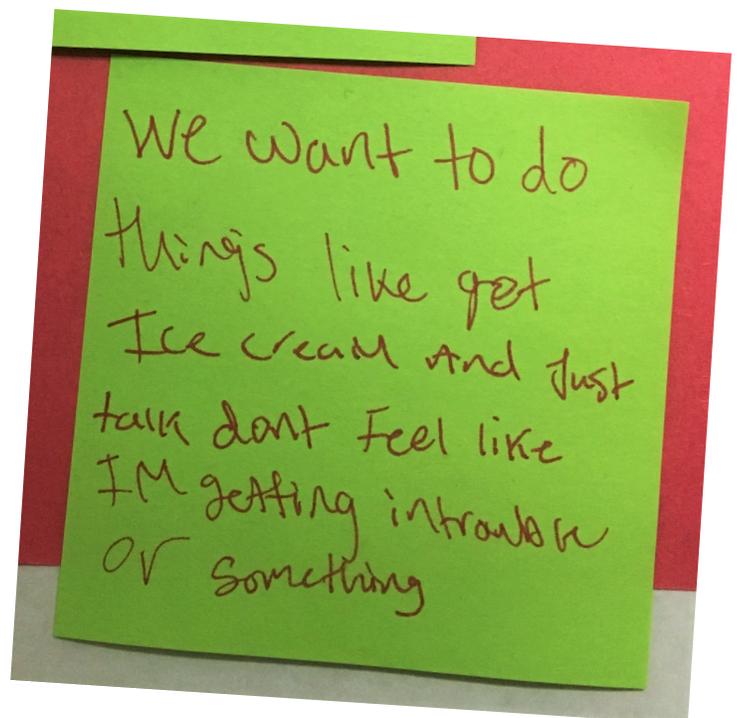
there are some specific things workers can do during that first meeting to help us

- 1 Explain the purpose of intake and the role of helping.
- 2 Don't expect parents to relay information to kids.
- 3 Ask us if we have questions (i.e. about the terms you use).
- 4 Ask if there are questions we don't feel like answering.
- 5 Ask. Listen. Don't interrupt (even if you think the youth is glorifying things or being ineffective).
- 6 Keep some small talk — informal, check-in.
- 7 Ask us about what's important to us.
- 8 Not everyone is open to face trauma — watch for triggers.
- 9 Understand our relationship with our family. Talk to us about our life and our family.
- 10 Let us share opinions about things outside the case (e.g., what are 5 things you love?)
- 11 Don't believe everything on paper — not everything is necessarily true.
- 12 I want to be the first to know what's happening next, not the last.
- 13 Get to know me.
- 14 Share something about yourself.
- 15 Ask "what can I do to make you comfortable?"

workers

other things workers can do to help us

- 1 Listen to the youth and not just the person they live with because what they say is not always what's going on.
- 2 Listen to what we feel would help us best and put it into action.
- 3 Discuss what we can agree to do to make the situation better for me.
- 4 Case workers should have a reward system.
- 5 We want to do things like get ice cream and just talk — we don't want to feel like we are always getting in trouble.
- 6 Help us turn weakness to strength.
- 7 Don't focus on the past, but focus on the future.
- 8 Even if I mess up, continue to help me build confidence and character.
- 9 Don't give up so fast.



judges

judges can do things that are meaningful to youth

- 1 Provide more types of resource-options — understanding what the client needs and identifying some that may be in their best interest.
- 2 Be more clear on the current situation of the Youth. Many times the Youth doesn't really know what is going on and what their situation is when discussed in court.
- 3 Placement options should be close to home. For older youth, look at employment options.
- 4 Be aware of placement sentences and look at shortened placement time options first to try to get them back home sooner than later.
- 5 Help youth understand court rules.
- 6 Don't be easy on us, but don't be too harsh.
- 7 Judges should listen more!
- 8 Have a conversation with us instead of being all formal.
- 9 Get to know me as a person.
- 10 Read the case before the hearing.
- 11 Visit placements!
- 12 They can give their honest opinion and give equal responses. Listen to your opinion.
- 13 Focus more on treatment than incarceration.

judges

judges can do things to help youth on supervision be successful

- 1 Talk to the youth and get their feedback on options and their ideas about what they think would be helpful moving forward (give them a voice).
- 2 Try to understand what the youth wants for their future.
- 3 Make sure their situation is clear so they can understand.
- 4 Give more rehabilitation programs that are consistent with their cases.
- 5 Make sure the youth's lawyer talks to the youth and they take into consideration the youth's voice before making decisions moving forward.
- 6 Look for the best placement options for learning and having fun at the same time.
- 7 Help to find more programming options. Less seclusion or secure type settings.
- 8 Let them do more stuff!
- 9 If a youth is continuously doing well and following conditions, review the order in court consistently to possibly end it sooner.
- 10 Try communicating with the youth about more options instead of just placing out of home (respite foster home, respite at group home, family member's home).
- 11 Try connecting with the juveniles — don't just treat them like a case because at the end of the day, we're still kids (and smile more).

judges

judges can help youth by communicating with caseworkers

- 1 Make it clear that workers are there to serve the youth and make sure they have a plan that everyone agrees on.
- 2 Make sure the workers are clear with their youth on what is going on and the time table of things.
- 3 Encourage workers to have more consistent meetings and communication with the youth they serve.
- 4 Remind workers to listen to the youth and take into consideration what they have to say without judgement and try to follow through (make decisions) in their best interest accordingly.
- 5 Direct the worker in a guidance role of some clearer options on what can be/ should be done moving forward (Keep workers advocating for Youth).
- 6 Read the documents the social workers write about youth/families.
- 7 Ask the case worker's opinion.
- 8 Tell workers to be more interactive and talk to their clients more.

judges

be aware that different youth have different preferences regarding being in court versus meeting with caseworkers

- 1 Some youth would rather meet in court because they feel the judge would advocate better for them and keep their lawyer accountable.
- 2 Some youth prefer court because they would get to know more about how everything was working out.
- 3 Some youth want more discussion about how they are doing and the progress they are making in their lives.
- 4 Some youth feel more comfortable talking in a situation with case workers in a more informal setting out of court.

beware of “unintended consequences”

- 1 It can really harm youth to take them away from home instead of giving them a chance to be at home with more support/services.
- 2 Consistent switching of court dates seems to affect/prolong a chance to return home.
- 3 Try more programming while in the home/community before removing youth to out of home care placements.
- 4 Think about the long term, not just the short term.
- 5 Don't use “a danger to the community” as an excuse every time — give us another chance.

law enforcement

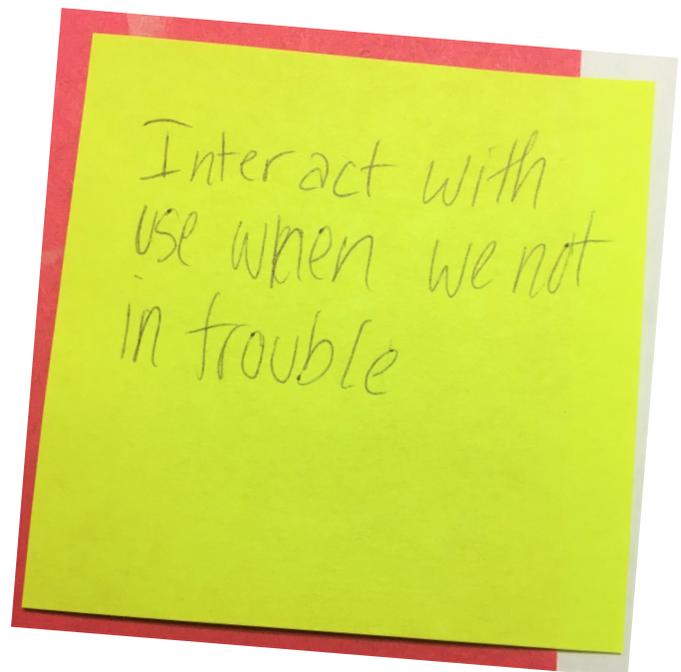
individual changes in how we interact can help

- 1 Remember, no one has ultimate power. Youth need someone to help and redirect them.
- 2 Everyone can show respect.
- 3 Be human.
- 4 Assume good intentions — don't prejudge.
- 5 Stop stereotyping.
- 6 Don't assume I have drugs just because I've been caught with them in the past, or people I was with had them.
- 7 Be straight up.
- 8 Don't misinterpret what a kid says.
- 9 Don't shoot unless you're in a life or death situation.
- 10 Don't use your badge as a tool to abuse your power/authority.
- 11 Don't scare kids while interrogating them. Don't play good cop/bad cop.
- 12 We can all change the little things we do in our interactions.
- 13 Awareness of racial dynamics and implicit bias is necessary to move forward.

law enforcement

system changes can help

- 1 Create more spaces for youth to talk and share with the police about how they feel.
- 2 Change laws/policies — not to punish and criminalize.
- 3 Have more “safety” training — more training on how to approach young people, using a positive youth development framework.
- 4 Fewer lethal weapons (more alternatives like rubber bullets, tasers, bean bags— but remember, these hurt, too!).
- 5 Better use of body cameras.
- 6 More female officers and officers of color.
- 7 Hold officers accountable.
- 8 Help people with addictions — don't just lock them up. Help them with a program or something.



law enforcement

empathize with youth

- 1 Put yourself in youth's shoes. Try to understand youth.
- 2 Get the facts.
- 3 Be understanding.
- 4 Approach us as kids, not adults, even though we may do adult type things.
- 5 Don't treat kids like they aren't human. You may be a cop, but you're human too.
- 6 Don't expect us to do bad again, just because we got in trouble before.
- 7 Treat us like your child.
- 8 Talk to us first to see how we're feeling.
- 9 Don't be quick to judge.
- 10 Don't give up so fast (they don't ask why you did what you did).
- 11 Be more caring, conscious, and consistent.

law enforcement

set the tone for a positive interaction

- 1 Introduce yourselves — we don't want to speak to strangers.
- 2 When taking youth into custody be gentle and use calm voices or we'll go into either flight or fight mode.
- 3 Be nice — don't be mean.
- 4 If a kid is disrespectful, don't be disrespectful back to them — cops have a bad reputation. Be a good role model.
- 5 Treat us how you want to be treated.
- 6 Don't assume just because we look suspicious.

be part of the community

- 1 Interact with our community.
- 2 Play sports with kids.
- 3 Interact with us when we're not in trouble.

public defenders

help us understand what we need to know and feel comfortable

- 1 Expungement is important. Explain expungement to us.
- 2 Don't be cheesy.
- 3 The court process is too formal. Try to make it less formal.
- 4 Make time for us, to answer our questions — five minutes before court is not enough.
- 5 They could do more to help us understand.

understand what it's like to be a youth going through the court process

- 1 Understand that we may have a lack of trust for people who work for the government (we may associate public defenders with police, social workers, all government).
- 2 Understand that the process is frustrating. Sometimes we want things to move faster — everything takes too long.
- 3 Realize that we are not always comfortable admitting what we don't understand.
- 4 We may feel as if we are lost in a world (thrown to the wolves).
- 5 Youth are often ignorant to their situation (not in control).
- 6 Stop just going off the paper.

public defenders

do public defenders scare you? How could we be less scary?

- 1 Public defenders do scare me because I don't know if they are here to help.
- 2 Sometimes yes, because I feel like I have to really reach out and use all of my possible resources in order to even have a voice in the courtroom or get help from the public defender.
- 3 They should crack jokes and make you feel comfortable.

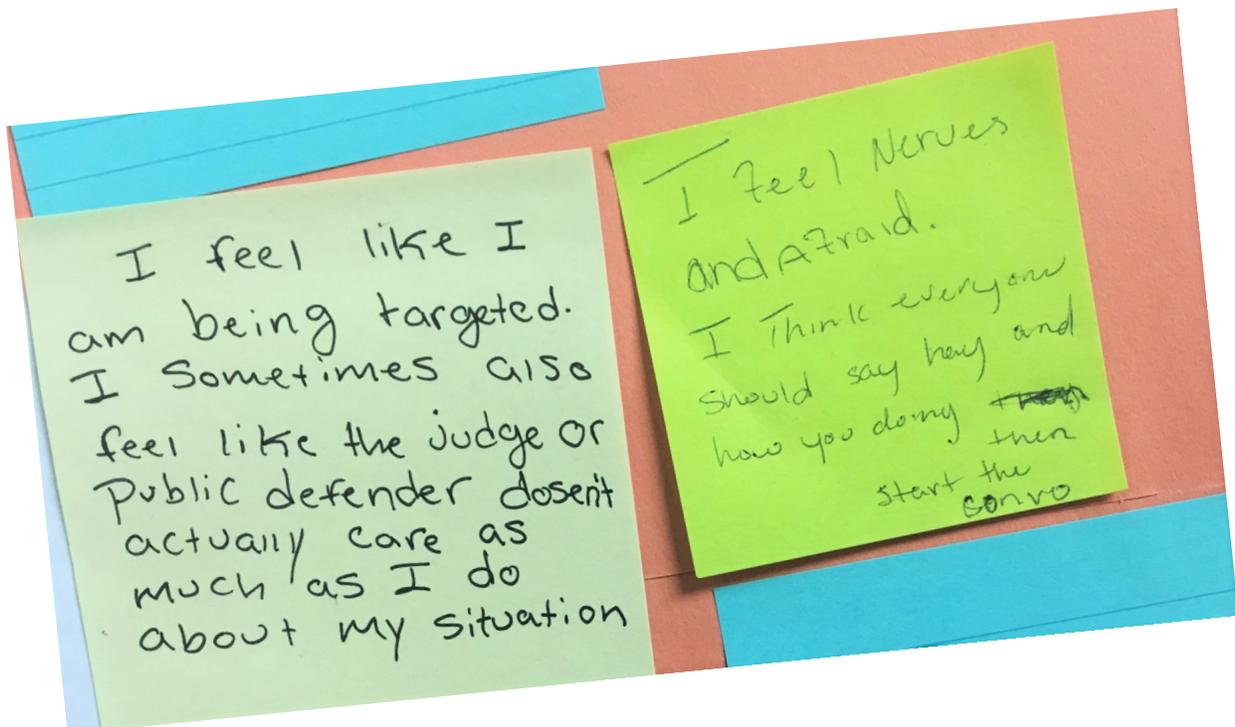
how much of what happens in court do you understand? how could we help you understand more?

- 1 Explain what the judge is saying so I can understand.
- 2 Meet with clients before the court hearing so enough time is given to explain conditions/ situation with client.
- 3 Use smaller words — not words that only you and the judge understand.
- 4 Ask other professionals to explain in terms youth can understand.

public defenders

how do you feel when you're in court? how can we help it be more positive?

- 1 It feels like a waste of my time because I get blamed for stuff I did not do.
- 2 Let the kid know it's ok to be nervous.
- 3 I feel like I am being targeted. I sometimes also feel like the judge or public defender doesn't actually care as much as I do about my situation.
- 4 I feel nervous and afraid. I think everyone in court should say hey and how you doing and then start the conversation.
- 5 Bring up the good things going on in my life (sports, jobs, etc.).



public defenders

what is the first thing your public defender should ask you?

- 1 How have you been?
- 2 What do you like to be called?
- 3 Do you understand the charges?
- 4 What's your side of the story?
- 5 What help do you need?
- 6 How can I make this more positive/better?
- 7 How can I make you more comfortable (so you're open to talk)?
- 8 Tell me your side of the story and how I can help you in the court room?
- 9 If you got arrested did the police read you your rights?
- 10 How do you want to approach this case (instead of the lawyer just assuming)?
- 11 What is your motive/plan for this hearing? What do you expect to happen?

public defenders

what's the most important thing that you want to happen in your court case?

- 1 Having my course case end!
- 2 Getting it over with, and getting help so I can do better.
- 3 To know what my charges are and why.
- 4 Having my charges get dropped.
- 5 I want guidance and actual positive resources in order to lead myself and other youth out of the court system.
- 6 Do your job to the best of your abilities!
- 7 To go home.

