

CREDIT OVERDUE:

How Many Academic
Credits Do Probation Youth
Earn in Juvenile Justice System?

BACKGROUND

On any given day across the country, more than 48,000 youth are confined to juvenile justice facilities that not only take them away from their homes, but also their schools for weeks or even months at a time. While these facilities typically provide classes to prevent young people from falling behind in their schoolwork, many discover when they return to school that they will not receive full academic credit for their completed coursework, that there is no record of their credits, or that their credits will not count toward graduation. The system has failed them, leaving them further behind.

THE PROBLEM

This problem exists on a national scale. A national survey of 208 professionals from 135 counties across 34 states and the District of Columbia confirmed that youth across the country frequently don't receive credit for the work they complete:

- Only 9% of survey respondents said youth always earn credit for all their coursework in detention facilities, which are short-term centers that primarily hold youth waiting for their court dispositions.
- Only 17% of respondents reported that youth always earn credit for all work completed in longer-term juvenile justice placement facilities post-adjudication.
- Roughly a quarter of survey respondents (27%) reported that classes in these facilities are not aligned with school or district standards.
- Less than a third of survey respondents noted that youth do not receive academic credits because records are lost.

When young people do not receive academic credit for coursework completed in juvenile justice facilities, they face a slew of educational consequences, including repeating courses or an entire grade level. Others may find themselves relegated to alternative and disciplinary schools. Unsurprisingly, they become discouraged, and their academic performance suf

RECOMMENDATIONS

As long as states and local jurisdictions continue to send young people to juvenile justice facilities, it is unconscionable to deprive them of the educational opportunities and academic credits to which they are entitled.

The following legislative solutions can help ensure youth receive the credit they are due:

States must create infrastructure and structural supports to ensure credit transfer.

-

