



# HOW COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS CAN LEVERAGE BENEFITS OF ASSESSMENT CENTERS

The success of Assessment Centers relies on fostering strong relationships with both community and system stakeholders. These relationships, and the collaboration that accompanies them, are essential in creating an effective, comprehensive, and equitable approach to addressing the complex needs of youth. Strong communication, shared goals, and mutual understanding ensure that a community's prevention, diversion, and early intervention efforts meet the needs of youth and families.

Through partnerships with youth and families, law enforcement, courts, education, child welfare, service providers, and other key stakeholders, communities can:

- **Optimize Resource Utilization:** Collaborative efforts ensure resources are allocated efficiently and effectively, minimizing redundancy. Stakeholders partner with Assessment Centers to provide expertise and connections to community-based services that may be beyond their scope or level of knowledge.
- **Promote Equity in Access:** Joint efforts among stakeholders facilitate more equitable access to services, ensuring that all youth, regardless of their background or circumstances, receive connections to the support they need.
- **Reduce Duplication of Efforts:** Coordination among various systems prevents overlapping services, leading to a more streamlined and cohesive approach.
- **Enhance Service Delivery:** Collaboration ensures that services are delivered in a manner that is responsive to the unique needs of each youth. By streamlining access to services, Assessment Centers ensure that youth and families receive the right support at the right time.
- **Preventing Service Fatigue:** Addressing concerns promptly and accurately helps prevent service fatigue among youth and families, increasing the likelihood of engagement.
- **Cost Efficiency:** When stakeholders collaborate with Assessment Centers and utilize them as a single point of contact to divert and prevent system involvement, communities save taxpayer dollars by directing resources to appropriate services and reducing inefficiencies.



# MAXIMIZING THE BENEFITS OF ASSESSMENT CENTERS

Different stakeholder groups stand to benefit from collaborating with Assessment Centers. Below are some examples of how specific stakeholder groups can benefit:

**7,898 Law Enforcement hours saved in one year by utilizing the 18th Judicial District Juvenile Assessment Center in Colorado when caregivers or other suitable persons could not be identified. The Assessment Center focuses on understanding underlying barriers and coordinates an appropriate release plan.**

## YOUTH, FAMILIES, AND COMMUNITY

Assessment Centers offer significant benefits to youth, families, and communities by creating streamlined and coordinated pathways to access community-based supports tailored to their needs and preferences. These centers empower youth and families by giving them choices in the services they receive, helping to prevent service fatigue. Assessment Centers provide earlier opportunities for diversion from the juvenile justice and child welfare systems, while also offering guidance, connections, and navigation support.

## LAW ENFORCEMENT

Assessment Centers can provide benefit to law enforcement agencies by offering an alternative to citation or arrest, providing a valuable tool to support youth and families. Assessment Centers optimize law enforcement time and processes by coordinating the release of youth back to the community or facilitating co-response efforts. They can also serve as a resource and "tool" for law enforcement when youth are in crisis and require interventions beyond traditional law enforcement measures.

**“New to Nevada needed help with daughter, This program helped me get in touch with after school programs and therapy. I don’t know how I would have found the resources without the help of The Harbor. Truly is a blessing.”**

**-Caregiver served by The Harbor Juvenile Assessment Center; Clark County, NV**

## 2014 to 2022

**Delinquency Petitions down 45%**  
**Detention Placements down 58%**

**- Multi-Agency Resource Center; Calcasieu Parish, LA**

## COURTS

Assessment Centers can benefit courts by diverting youth and families from the court intake process, enabling courts to focus their resources on the small number of youth who pose a public safety risk. By utilizing the Assessment Center, courts ensure youth and families still get support they need while also enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of the judicial system.



# MAXIMIZING THE BENEFITS OF ASSESSMENT CENTERS

**Enhancing the capacity of local mental health practitioners by making them more accessible. Youth Connect, facilitated by the YFRC, empowers youth to choose their own therapist –based on personal preferences and expertise – all at no cost.**

**-Youth Connect | Shelby County, TN Youth and Family Resource Center (YFRC)**



## SERVICE PROVIDERS

Assessment Centers can benefit the service provider community by ensuring that youth and family needs align with program eligibility and the populations their services are designed to support. Assessment Centers help streamline the referral process, making it more efficient for service providers to connect with those in need.

## SCHOOLS

Assessment Centers can benefit schools by providing alternatives to traditional disciplinary processes like suspensions and expulsions. They can also support by addressing underlying issues contributing to chronic absenteeism. Staff, such as counselors and principals, can maximize resources by using the Assessment Center to make intentional, strength-based connections that address the specific needs of youth and families.



## 60% of Youth Diverted

**The Family Resource Center in Ashtabula County, Ohio (serving a rural jurisdiction) diverted almost 60% of youth who were referred to the prosecutor's office for charges occurring on school property.**



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Cross-system and community collaboration is essential for effectively addressing the complex needs of youth, who often face challenges beyond legal issues, such as mental health concerns, substance abuse, educational gaps, and family instability. By bringing together various stakeholders—youth and families, law enforcement, courts, education, child welfare, and service providers—Assessment Centers ensure a more comprehensive and equitable approach to services in the community. This collaboration allows for the efficient use of resources, promotes equitable access, and reduces duplication of efforts. To achieve successful planning and implementation, it is critical that communities engage in meaningful dialogue with stakeholders to align their needs and interests with the goals of the Assessment Centers. This shared vision helps to guide the planning process and maximizes benefits for all involved, including youth, families, law enforcement, courts, schools, and service providers.

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