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Holding Youth Accountable and Instilling Responsibility

The Path to Safer Facilities is designed to increase preventative measures, enhance meaningful activities for youth, revise intervention strategies to hold youth accountable, and move away from seclusion as punishment. We are focusing on helping our youth learn to be responsible through consequences that focus on true accountability.

According to Ken Haldeman, a Youth Specialist at Indian River JCF, the Path to Safer Facilities is "moving in the right direction." He stresses youth accountability: "Not giving something to a youth who didn't earn it is the key." "We need to write the Youth Behavior Incident Report (YBIR). Otherwise, the youth will get the incentive."

Seclusion as a punishment does not teach responsibility because it does not involve learning, and it puts youth into a passive role instead of an active role. Youth are more likely to learn when they are engaged and required to make restitution, paying back for their misbehavior. By utilizing the Strength-based Behavioral Management System (SBBMS) Behavior Consequences and Treatment Grid*, you are requiring youth to take an active role in their misbehavior. Below are just some of the ways that any staff member can hold a youth accountable:

- Taking away the youth's SBBMS privileges—remember, these are not rights; these are incentives for positive behavior
- Requiring youth to complete meaningful writing assignments that help the youth connect the undesired behavior to the desired behavior
- Prohibiting youth from participating in extracurricular activities
- Requiring the youth to share an apology with a group
- Presenting on a particular topic that is relevant to the misbehavior
- Ensuring that youth "make their day" before receiving incentives
- Ensuring that youth are "in good standing" in order to participate in desirable activities

Steven Schuster, a Social Studies and Psychology Teacher at Cuyahoga Hills JCF, put it this way: "Hold to your own standards. Stick to your guns. The rest will fall into place. If you give in, you lose control."

Meaningful activities and incentives are also valuable tools. Jessica Jefferson, a Social Worker at Circleville JCF, stresses the importance of understanding incentives that mean the most to youth. "If you have something for them to do, something that they really love, that's the key," she said. "I believe in giving them a lot and taking it away when they get write-ups." Examples include fun evening activities, art and craft privileges, and extra phone calls.

In the near future, we will hold focus groups to solicit additional feedback from a variety of staff. We will also partner with union leadership to further develop prevention strategies, incentives, and sanctions. By holding youth accountable and requiring youth to respond, we are instilling responsibility and preparing them for a more successful future.

** If you need access to the SBBMS Grid, it is a part of Standard Operating Procedure 303.01.06, or please see a Unit Manager or Unit Management Administrator.*