Committed to proven approaches, DYS uses evidence-based practices within facilities. According to the U.S. Department of Justice/Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is “the most evidence-based” form of intervention.

CBT is being incorporated into every housing unit at DYS. CBT focuses on targeting certain criminogenic factors youth might have and helps them to restructure, or change, the way they think and respond in various situations. This is done through:

- Teaching and practicing noncriminal behavior
- Building problem-solving, self-management, anger management and coping skills
- Reducing association with antisocial peers by teaching youth to recognize and avoid negative influences (people, places and things), practicing new skills (like being assertive instead of passive) and how to maintain relationships without getting into trouble
- Reducing conflict, building positive relationships and increasing better communication and problem solving skills with family members
- Enhancing school performance, rewards and satisfaction
- Promoting involvement and satisfaction in prosocial leisure activities
- Reducing the personal and interpersonal supports for substance abusing behavior and enhancing alternatives to substance abuse

By using evidence-based CBT, DYS supports lasting change in the lives of youth.

In the Community:

DYS also uses best practices in the community. The agency is committed to a system that treats all youth with fairness and that works to reduce racial and ethnic disparities.

The agency has partnered with Ohio’s largest 14 counties (Allen, Butler, Clark, Cuyahoga, Franklin, Hamilton, Lorain, Lucas, Mahoning, Montgomery, Richland, Stark, Summit, and Trumbull) to address Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC), the large number of minority youth entering Ohio’s juvenile justice system. These 14 counties make up over 85% of the annual commitments to DYS.

Currently over 20 DMC projects are being funded, including a variety of program types including mentoring, wraparound, diversion and alternatives to detention. This approach is expected to impact the treatment of youth at each decision point of the juvenile justice system, from arrest and detention, through case disposition and length of stay in the system (probation, incarceration and parole).

The goal is to reduce the overrepresentation of youth of color in Ohio’s juvenile justice system, involve local jurisdictions in the reform process and use data to drive decision-making. The Ohio State University’s Center for Learning Excellence has been assisting with data collection, training, providing technical assistance and evaluating the funded projects.

In the coming year, the University of Toledo will lead five DMC Institutes that address justice practices and cultural issues, mental health, law enforcement, school resource officers and families/stakeholders.