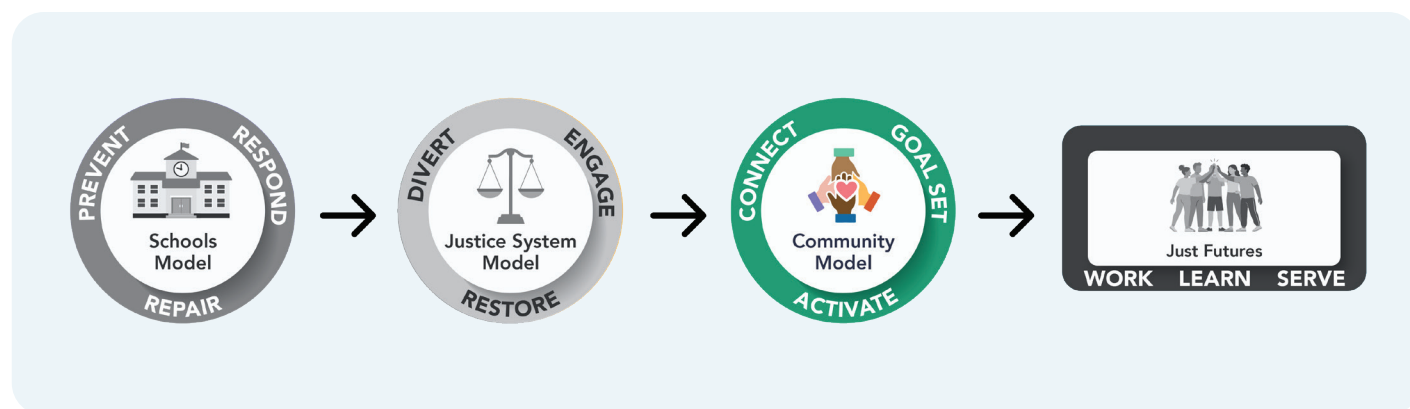


Connect, Goal Set, Activate: A Model for Community



The **Community Model: Connect, Goal Set, Activate** extends support beyond diversion through relationship-building, individualized goal setting, and concrete action. The model is designed to help youth identify what matters to them, strengthen relationships and resources, and take purposeful steps toward goals related to their health and well-being, education, careers, and communities. The purpose is to help youth build confidence, skills, and social capital to navigate challenges, pursue meaningful opportunities, and continue thriving after their involvement with JDI ends. The Community Model provides sustained commitment to young people's well-being that will further decrease the likelihood of entering the criminal legal system and grow their capacity for being healthy and happy members of an inclusive school environment and wider society.

NCRC developed Thrive as a voluntary next step for youth who successfully complete JDI. Before beginning the program, youth complete a pre-survey in which they're asked how much they know about the Thrive program, their expectations from the program, and how they feel about goal setting. Learning new skills was the most commonly selected anticipated benefit, identified by 71% of youth and 91% of caregivers (Figure 21).¹ Youth also frequently identified getting a job (57%) and doing better in school (54%) as areas where they expected Thrive to help. Caregivers were especially likely to identify learning skills for work/career readiness (80%) and building relationships that could help youth achieve their goals (72%). Youth entered Thrive with high expectations but varying levels of readiness. 80% thought the program would be very helpful, while 56% said they felt very ready to begin.

¹ Sample sizes vary by question and survey wave. Unless a result is specifically identified as paired, pre-survey, Phase 1, and Phase 2 results reflect respondents at each wave and should be read as descriptive comparisons rather than individual-level change. For figures from the earlier six-month model, Phase 1 refers to the three-month survey and Phase 2 refers to the six-month/end-of-program survey.

Community Model: Connect, Goal Set, Activate

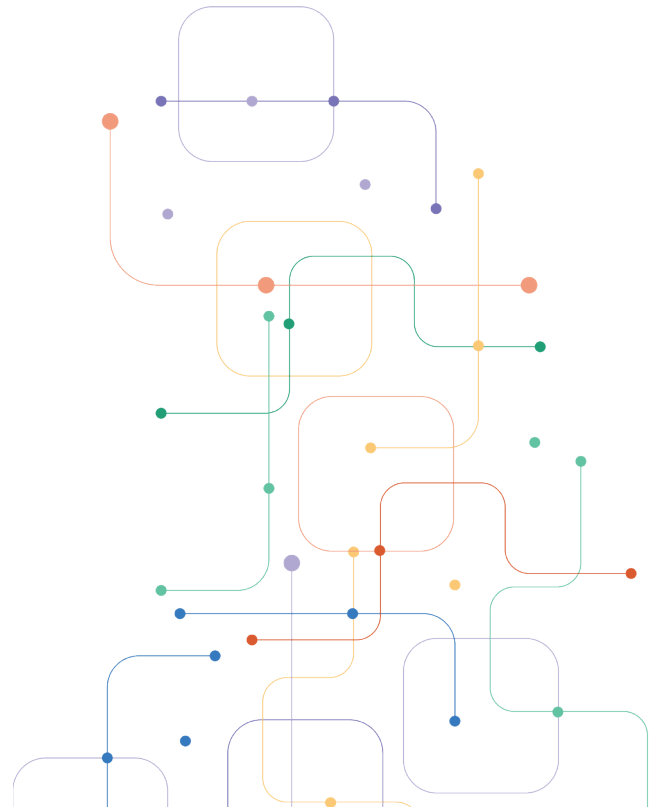


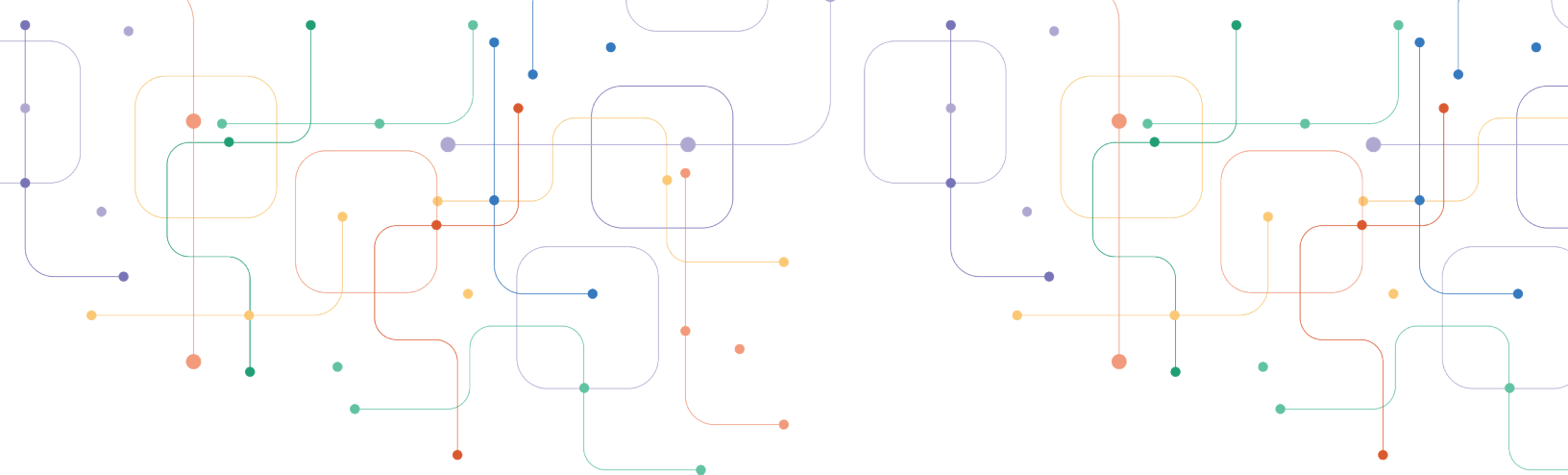
The Community Model is organized around building connections for youth, helping youth set goals for the near and distant future, and giving youth the tools to activate the skills and resources they have gained. The aim of the Community Model is to support youth who need or want to continue the engagement they received through the Justice System Model and increase their capacity to contribute to greater belonging in school and their broader communities.

Building and strengthening connection happens in several ways. One is through caseworkers who connect with youth to support them throughout the program. Another is through cohorts who create opportunities for peer connections. A third is connection between the program and caregivers who are engaged in support for youth, which supports greater connection between youth and their families. And lastly is the connection with community through pro-social activities, continuing and expanding the supports that youth receive through the Justice System Model.

Goal setting is part of a process of strengths-based coaching that helps youth better understand themselves and their interests so they can set goals that they can work toward in the short and long term. This approach to goal setting helps youth set goals that are self-selected, appropriate for their development, and consistent with the aim of staying out of the criminal legal system. Goal setting helps create a positive identity and sense of purpose.

The Community Model provides opportunities for youth to activate the skills and knowledge that they gain throughout the program. They receive support to work towards the goals that they set and build positive relationships with peers, caregivers, and other adults. Case workers help some youth find jobs and get driver's licenses. Youth who finish the program have the option of returning and mentoring youth who are newer to the program. Activating what they learn builds resilience and reduces the likelihood of future justice system involvement.





CONNECT

Thrive combines a cohort-based curriculum with individual case management, peer support, and community resources. Originally structured as a six-month program, the current iteration is designed for youth to complete a 13-sequence curriculum in three and a half months, while receiving case management support at the same time.

GOAL SET

Before asking youth to formally set goals, Thrive uses a sequence of reflection activities to help them consider who they are, what matters to them, what they need, and what they want their lives to look like. The opening curriculum sessions move from identifying personal strengths and positive identity to clarifying values and dreams, then to examining needs and emotions. Youth are asked questions such as: Who are you now? What do you care about? Where do you want to be? Who do you want to become? Activities include strengths exercises, a life map or letter to a future self, and guided reflection on what thriving could look and feel like. This process is intended to help youth choose goals that carry personal meaning rather than simply meeting an expectation set by an adult.

ACTIVATE

Once youth identify a goal, Thrive helps them move from intention to action. Cohort sessions teach youth to translate goals into steps and identify the resources, relationships, and routines that can support follow-through, while individual meetings allow youth and case managers to review progress, respond to obstacles, and identify the support needed for the next step. Nearly every curriculum session closes by prompting youth to schedule their next one-on-one meeting with a case manager, reinforcing the link between group learning and individualized follow-through. A case manager might help a youth complete an application, locate a program, communicate with an organization, or break a larger task into more manageable parts. Activation therefore involves more than referring youth to a service; it is an ongoing process of helping them use available resources and continue moving forward if and when challenges arise.

Integrate, Collaborate, Lead

A multi-institutional framework with distinct but overlapping models of youth engagement requires different approaches to partnerships between an organization like NCRC and the institutions it supports. A community-based organization will take on different roles and develop different relationships as it works across schools, the justice system, and the community. Integrating, collaborating, and leading are ways of engaging that show up in each of the models. However, each represents a dominant mode of engaging with a particular model.

The Community Model is distinguished from schools and the justice system by the absence of a formal system for a community-based organization to integrate or collaborate with. This lack of a formal system gives organizations an opportunity to lead the development of a program that complements the other models. Leading program development means understanding the population of youth that need support, such as youth who have completed a diversion program but can benefit from additional programming, and understanding the specific needs of the youth that the organization serves, such as mental health services or peer cohorts. Whereas integrating and collaborating require accommodating the goals of other institutions, leading entails identifying and dictating the goals of the program. Leading also involves challenges such as funding and staffing programs independently of other institutions that can provide money and people to implement programming. Despite these challenges, leading gives a community-based organization a level of flexibility and independence to meet the needs of young people.

