

Are Our Youth Facilities Safe?

Young people, staff and families describe the culture and their experiences.

Safety is more than the absence of harm — it's the presence of predictable routines, respectful relationships and transparent practices that allow young people to focus on learning and self-improvement. When young people, staff and families uniformly perceive a facility or program as safe, we see fewer incidents and greater willingness among young people to engage in relationships and programming that helps set them up for success when they leave.

In this brief, the [Center for Improving Youth Justice](#) (CIYJ) shares some of its Performance-based Standards safety data from three critical perspectives — young people who live the experience, staff who work with the young people and families whose trust and partnership hinge on knowing their child is safe. Youth justice agencies use the data to identify safety priorities and address concerns voiced in the survey responses.

The percentage of young people who fear for their safety has increased. April 2025 data showed that they feared having their property stolen (14%), being beaten up (23%) and being forced to engage in sexual activity (4%).

The percentage of staff who fear for their safety has decreased since the COVID-19

pandemic. About 22% of staff working in correction facilities and 20% in detention centers said they feared for their safety in April 2025, down from the COVID time highs of 25% (corrections) and 28% (detention). Most said they received the training needed to do their jobs (91%), rated the support of their supervisor as excellent or good (76%) and were satisfied with their jobs (86%).

Most families continue to feel their child was safe. About 91% either agree or strongly agree that their child was safe in April 2025. They knew how to visit their child (95%), they could reach their child in an emergency (88%) and staff treated them with respect (96%).

CIYJ's data comes from Youth Climate, Staff Climate and Family Surveys administered by more than 50 state and county youth justice agencies who voluntarily collect data and use it to improve system and individual outcomes through the [Performance-based Standards program](#).

This brief was written by Kim Godfrey Lovett, CIYJ Executive Director.

