

Family Engagement: A Critical Element of Effective Juvenile Justice



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Why focus on family engagement?

Justice-involved young people with strong ties to a broadly defined support network have:

- Better individual outcomes while in facility
- Better outcomes post-release



Research Findings

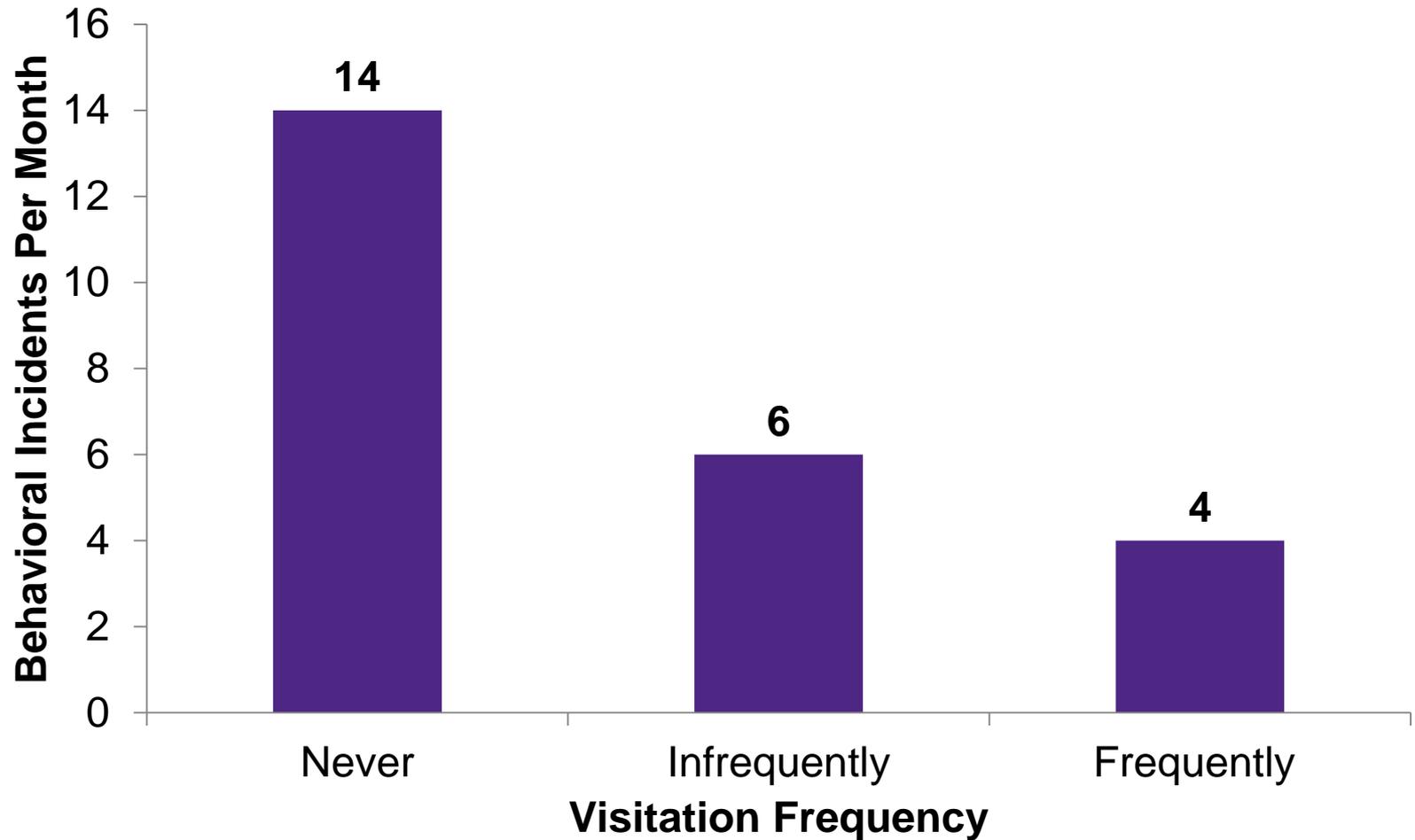
California research: Mental health symptoms in incarcerated youth

Visitation has been shown to have positive effects on juvenile justice involved youth.

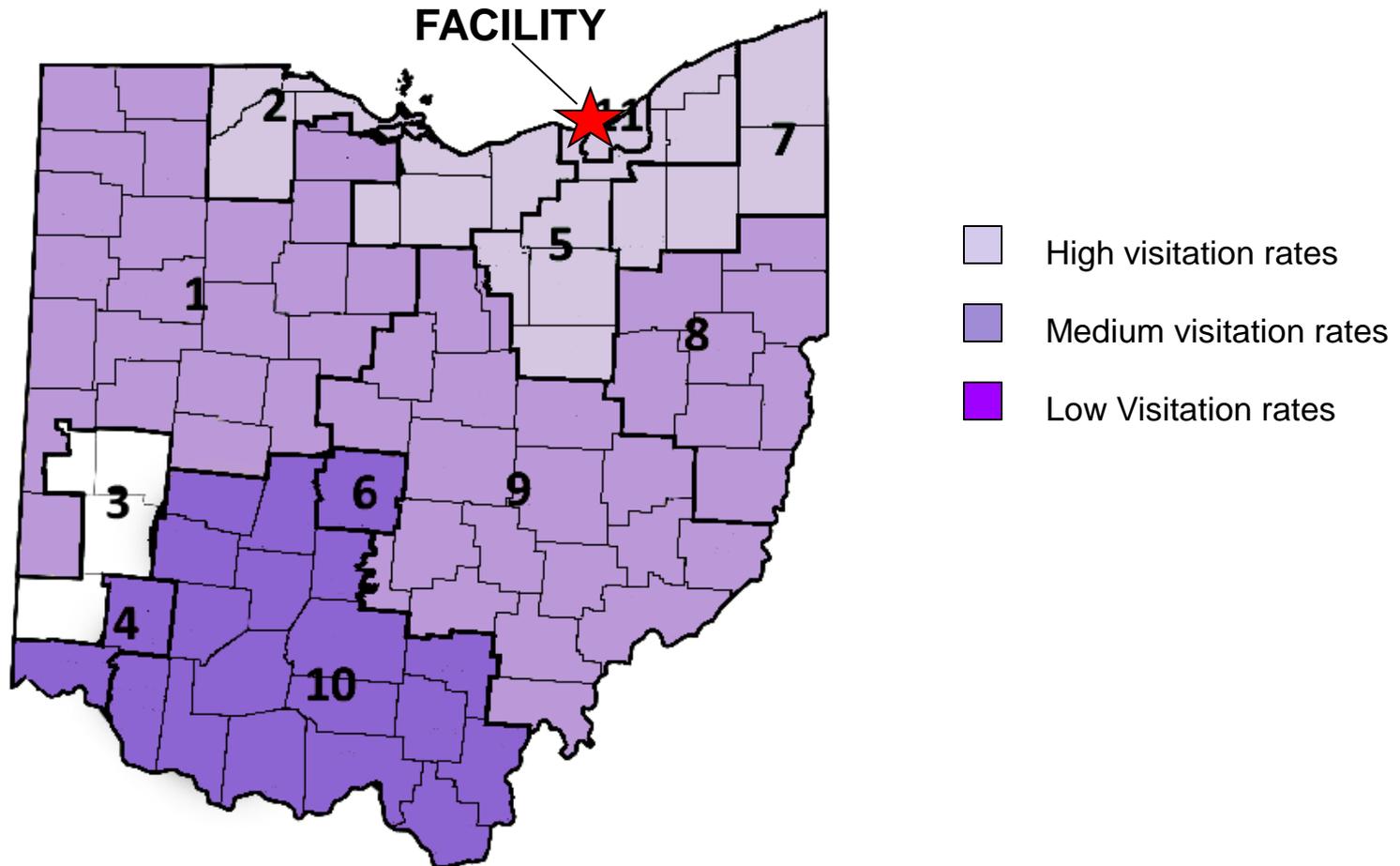
- Improves initial adjustment to facility
- Reduces symptoms of depression

These effects were found regardless of the quality of the interaction between the resident and the parent.

Ohio Research on Visitation and Facility Incidents



Ohio Research: Relationship between Geography and Visitation



School District	Eleven	Two	Five	Seven	Nine	Eight	Four	One	Six	Ten
Average Number of Visits per Year	21.5	19.3	18.8	13.3	9.6	9	3.6	3	2.1	0

Family Engagement and Recidivism

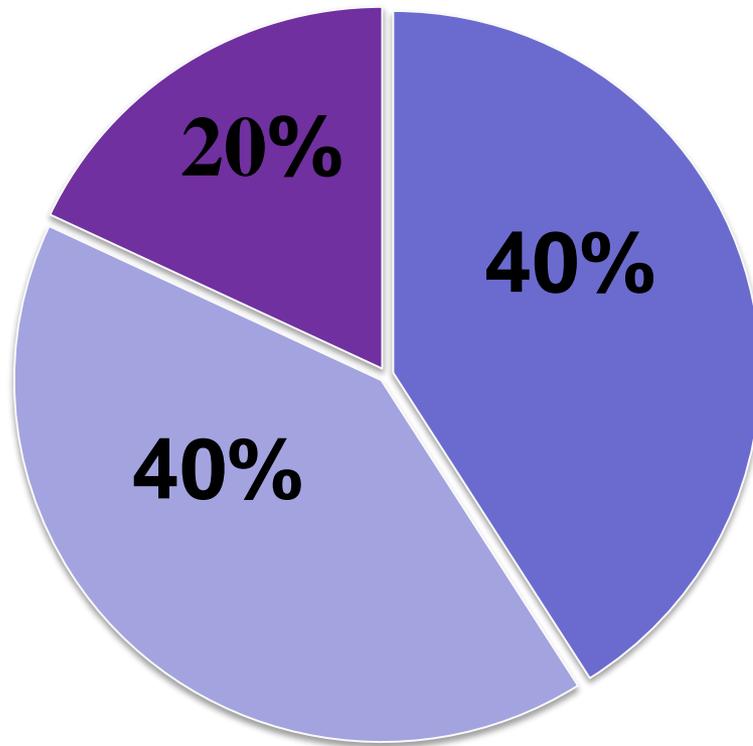
Research studies from both the adult and juvenile justice literature indicate that there is a relationship between visitation and reduced recidivism.

MN: Adults in DOC custody who received more visits – particularly a varied array of visitors – had better outcomes post-release

MI, FL – Visitation reduced or delayed recidivism for juveniles in these jurisdictions

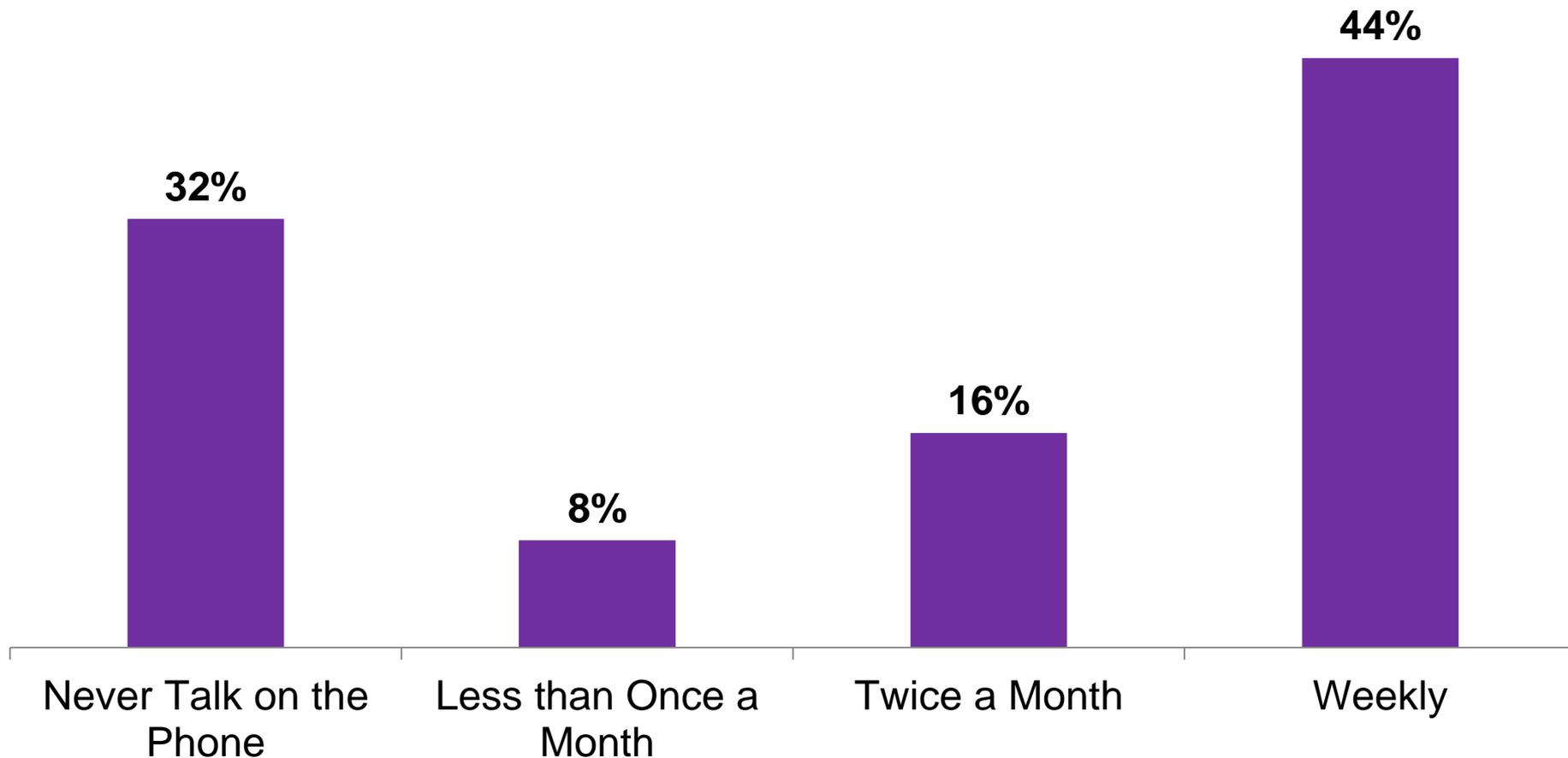
Virginia DJJ Youth Survey

Frequency of Visits among DJJ Youth

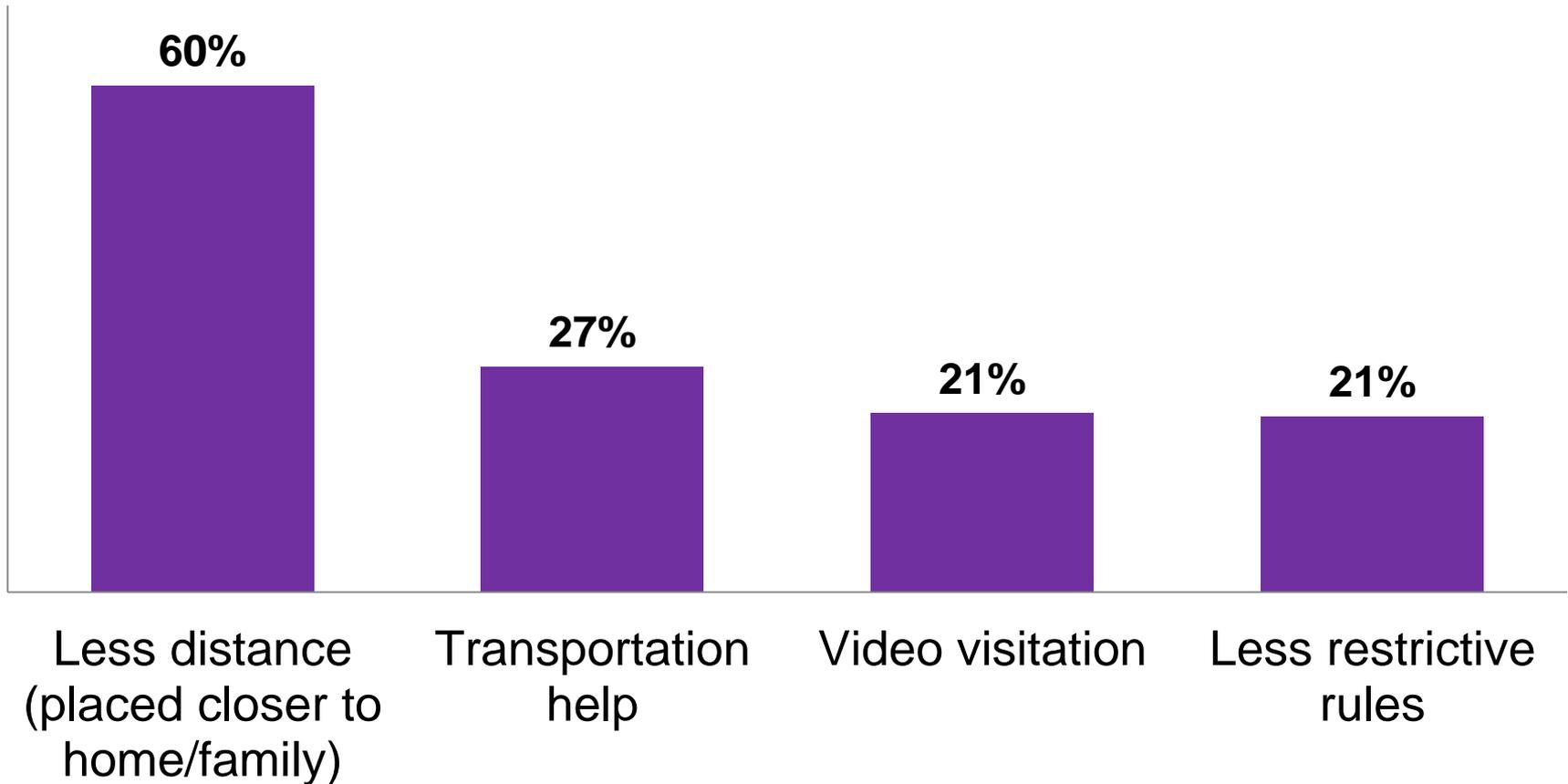


- Rarely to Never receive visits
- 1-2 times a month
- Once a week

Youth Survey – Frequency of Phone Calls



Youth Survey – Visitation suggestions



Family Interviews

Overall positive view of DJJ staff, reported challenges with DJJ policies.

- Dress code
- Privacy
- Security measures create barriers
- Environment uncomfortable and stale

What works?

What works in policy and practice?

Meaningful assessment of what is essential for security and what isn't.

- Where are we creating unnecessary barriers?
- Who can visit?
- When / How often can they visit?

Clear communication about policies

- Use strategies that are attuned to the range of families' needs

Empower and incentivize staff to solve problems

What works in policy and practice?

Maximize the use of time a family is on site, but don't replace visitation with therapy

Don't assume we know what the barrier is – ask the family to partner on a solution

What works in structure and design?

Welcoming atmosphere

- Color choices
- Decoration
- “home-like”

Consider the structure of security

- Is bullet-proof glass essential?
- Zones of access can help create tiers of searches and procedures

What works in structure and design?

Privacy

- Huge visitation settings are hard to supervise and create barriers of their own
- Smaller settings where families can converse or meet with staff contribute to trust
- Staff need settings to discuss case planning and treatment information

Provide activities for visitation – families often need something to occupy smaller children or to focus on

Questions?